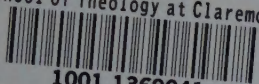


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ADVENT TO TRINITY

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PULPIT PREPARATION

A Series of Sermons by Various
Divines for Sundays and Holy Days
throughout the Ecclesiastical Year.

Edited by
JOHN HENRY BURN, B.D.,
RECTOR OF WHATFIELD, NEAR IPSWICH.

Vol. I.
Advent to Trinity Sunday.

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Pulpit Preparation

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THE ADVENT CALL

BY THE REVEREND RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM, M.A.

ISAIAH i. 18.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," etc.

ADVENT has come to us once more, and with Advent that which gives to it perhaps most of its distinctive character—the voice of the Prophet Isaiah. No one with any sense of religion ever wearies of hearing that voice, or ever fails to be stirred by it. It may be only for a moment, but as we listen to those old words, uttered so many centuries ago, under circumstances so totally different, they *do* stir our hearts, they *do* make us feel what a wonderful strength and sweetness there is in them. How is it possible for hypocrisy and formalism to stand before this blast of the trumpet? What on earth is the use of Church Services and Sacraments and Conventions and Prayer Meetings, and all the rest of it, if a man's life be evil and insincere? Use of it? *Use* there is none, but *effect* there is; and that effect is to make God very angry indeed. "I cannot away with iniquity *and* the solemn meeting." It is the *combination* of the two, you see,

which passes the patience of Almighty God. One might almost venture to say that He could put up with one of them at a time, for He would know how to treat it, but the combination is too much even for Him Who is so infinitely patient and loving. "I cannot away," He says, "with iniquity *and* the solemn meeting."

And yet, if you know anything of the religious world, you know that this is the precise combination which is continually recurring to this very day. We know it is because every now and again some extraordinary instance of it comes to light—generally speaking through the Courts of Justice. Some man is found out, who is a swindler and a villain of the worst and most heartless kind, who has deceived thousands by the simple process of being prominent at religious meetings, and of making long prayers. It is a process which comes extremely easy to a good many people, and has always been more or less popular. The victims of such rogues had all read Isaiah—not to mention other Scriptures—and yet they never suspected and could not bring themselves to believe that a man who could talk so piously and pray so well at the solemn meeting *could* be guilty of iniquity. So they gave their money to him, and he used it up. I know plenty of people in this city who have given large sums to swindlers, without any precaution against misuse, simply because these people shone at the solemn meeting.

Well, you hear what God says. As long as the world lasts "iniquity *and* the solemn meeting" will go hand in hand. You need not avoid the solemn meeting because hypocrites and villains make use of it from time to time. But you may have the discretion never to trust to fervent words and pious demeanour without some other and better security. God Almighty "cannot away with iniquity *and* the solemn meeting": He hates it and denounces it because it exists: that it *does* exist, aye and flourishes too, is very largely owing to the sinful folly of religious people who absolutely lay themselves out to

be gulled and cheated by knaves who use the language and wear the mask of a fervent piety.

I could not forbear saying so much as that, because God knows it is sorely needed : but it is not the main thing I want to talk to you about. The other things in this wonderful chapter appeal to our conscience, to our reason, to our knowledge of the world, to our experience of right and wrong. This thing, in my text, appeals to our hearts : " Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord "—why, how unexpected an offer that is ! It is as though He said, I know that I have spoken very strongly about your sins and your hypocrisies. I have not refrained from telling you very plainly what I think of them. I have commanded you to repent and amend on pain of utter destruction. But I do not want you to think of Me only as a God that hateth iniquity, as the High and Holy One that is of purer eyes than to behold evil. If I have made you feel angry, or sad, or hopeless, " come now and let us reason together," let us talk about it, let us have it out quietly. You will see then that I am not what you think, and the matter between us is otherwise than you fancy. " Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Now that is certainly unexpected, standing where it does : and if unexpected, still more is it beautiful and consoling, because it is so " humane " ; it is God putting Himself down to our level, bidding us talk to Him quite fearlessly and with entire confidence in the result. Well, I take it that is what we want, is it not ? We all feel, I suppose, that to preach holy living, after the example of Our Saviour, is the duty of the Church. And we all rejoice that that duty is being done so well. There are so many great preachers of righteousness, and so many books which put our Christian obligations in a striking light. But are we not all the while conscious of a danger, of a difficulty ? Is it not sometimes very disheartening,

very discouraging ? Oh, it is a very beautiful thing, this higher Christian life, and altogether admirable, with its unselfishness, its devotion to other people's interests and so on. It is indeed altogether admirable. And then how frightfully black one's sins and failures look in the light of the Gospel, the light which streams upon us from the face of Christ. They are indeed hideously black, and what a terrible danger there is of our becoming hopelessly discouraged. I do believe more people fail in religion through a sense of discouragement than any other way.

It is so easy to talk beautifully—or at least to think and feel admirably about the higher religious life: *but just you try*. It is only when you try to be really good, that you find out how very bad you are. And success is so faint, so slow. There are thousands of people in our churches to-day who listen quietly to the preaching of righteousness, in lessons or in sermons, with a miserable aching in their hearts. I have tried, they whisper to themselves—really tried, prayerfully tried—and how much the better am I to-day ? “Not a bit better,” whispers Satan back again, “not a bit better. Drop it. Keep up an appearance, and let things slide.”

“Come now and let *us* reason together”—do you hear that ? Do you realize Whose Voice that is ? It is the Voice of God, the same God Who demands of you that you *shall*, you *must*, “cease to do evil, learn to do well.” The great God Who only cares for character and conduct. Aye, and He will hold you to it also, and He will judge you strictly at the last by what He actually finds in you. Well, what does He say ? “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” What does that mean ? Forgiveness, of course, free forgiveness—forgiveness, as we know, through the Sacrifice and Blood of Christ. Ah, it isn't any use pursuing righteousness without having “the Blood of Christ ” to fall back upon. When I say that, I am not using the language of any particular

theological school. I would not say it if it were not really true to my own religious convictions. And this is one of the strongest and the clearest. There are times—and not a few—when I do not care to know about anything at all but just the Cross and that atoning Death on Calvary. Those are the hours when I take stock of the life which I have lived and am living. I look upon the pages of the book in which the record of my life is written. God gave me those pages, fair and white and clean, that I might write thereon the story of His grace and of my service. What do they look like as I turn them over? Ah, God in Heaven!

It is *then* that I could go in a perfect passion of weeping and fling myself down beneath the Cross. Nothing of any importance or of any use save that He died there for me and for my sins. What matter theories about the Atonement? What odds does it make that we have altered our way of speaking about it—that we have abandoned phrases and similitudes and renderings of the mystery which were liable to abuse? It makes no difference. He died for me. His precious Blood has not lost its power to cleanse. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” In this confidence, this freedom, this forgiveness, I can face again my worst enemy, i.e., myself. I can face God with His supreme demand upon my life, with His inexorable claim for righteousness, with His just judgment at the Last Day. *With* this “Blood of cleansing”—yes; without it—no.

Now notice again. You have seen how unexpectedly God breaks in with this Voice, “Come now”—and with this promise. Because it was wanted, so absolutely wanted. See again how His Voice returns (in verses 19, 20) to the old familiar tone—“If . . . if . . .” It is, as you know, a very common thing to separate verse 18 from its surroundings, and to hold it up as if it were an isolated utterance, all by itself. It is not, and there is always a

danger in treating it as if it were. The Bible is not intended to be read in isolated texts, but in passages and paragraphs ; and a great deal of the use made of particular texts in it savours far more of abuse than of use. See how this verse 18 is wedged in between the demand for righteousness and the announcement of judgment. "Cease to do evil ; learn to do well"—that comes before. If you do, you will be happy and safe ; if you do not, you will perish miserably—that comes after. It is the effort to dissociate these elements which has made all the mischief.

Put the doctrines of Grace and the Cross of Jesus, and the Precious Blood, right down there where you find them in this chapter between the just demands of a Righteous God and our own miserable efforts to rise to those demands, and all will be well. None ever honestly and faithfully tried to do God's Will without being horribly dissatisfied with himself, without being profoundly moved to seek forgiveness, atonement, cleansing. Only consider what God calls you to : only think of the enormous responsibility which is thrown upon you : only try to live as God would have it, as you yourself would have it ; and the Cross of Christ will become to you at once in a very true sense your only comfort, hope, and strength.

Is there any single soul that is weary in well doing—that is depressed, cast down by reason of failure, trying to please God and not succeeding ? Why, then, it is to that one He speaks—"Come now and let us reason together." "Reason together" ? What about ? About the beauty and the dignity of being holy and unselfish and perfect ? About the ugliness and miserable end of sin ? No, there is not any need for that just now. What about, then ? Why, about forgiveness, pardon, cleansing, satisfaction, full and free, at once above price and without price. Art thou weary, or afraid, or despondent ? Let Him talk comfortably to thee. Behold Christ died for thee precisely because thou hast failed, hast striven and fallen short, hast tried to be good and hast not succeeded.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

BY THE REVEREND LORING W. BATTEN, D.D.

PSALM cxix. 105.

“Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.”

THERE are few experiences more trying than floundering along an unknown road in the dark. It is difficult to keep in the path, it is impossible to tell which direction to go, and it seems as if the feet have a peculiar aptitude for striking every obstruction or inequality in the way. The uneven places, the rocks, the puddles, which we automatically step over or by in the daylight, cause us to stumble if we try to walk in the darkness. And yet we must travel by night. The time has long gone by when the activity of the world ends at sundown. Nor need we befool ourselves by juggling with the hours of the day, so as to make the working day more nearly coincident with that of sunshine. Such a plan might have had value years ago, but the improvement in lighting has put the modern civilized world somewhat in the position of God Himself to Whom the day and night are both alike.

It is just this artificial light which has robbed the night of its terrors. In the long night of the Arctic regions explorers are constrained to live in close quarters, for they

can carry no lanterns which make possible the negotiation of the terrible ice hummocks. But with us the roads are lighted or we can carry lanterns adequate to dispel the darkness, and therefore the night no longer arrests our progress.

Life is often compared to a road, in the Bible and elsewhere, and the simile is a happy one, for we are all pilgrims on a great highway. But on this life journey we are always travelling an unexplored region. Every individual here to-day must walk to-morrow in a path never before trodden by human feet. We confidently expect that the experience of to-morrow will be much like that of yesterday. The probability is that it will be essentially the same, but we do not know. We can only go on step by step, one at a time, walking into the future by faith and not by sight.

At times this highway of life is straight, easy to find, and pleasant to follow. At times there seem to be no impediments which we may not easily step over, or walk around. But it is not always so. Sometimes we are sore puzzled to know which is the right path for us. Now and then it seems as if we reach a veritable *cul de sac*, or blind alley ; or occasionally it is more like the old woods road which one follows into the heart of the forest, only to find the traces so dim that the way is lost in the depths of the wilderness, and once in a while we do not see the obstructions, but stumble and fall, and such falls hurt.

Does it ever seem as if God had started His children on a march without taking enough pains to blaze the way, to guide the faltering steps, to hold up the tottering feet ? The author of the longest poem in the Bible did not think so. He knew the perils of walking in the darkness, but he did not believe such walking was necessary ; because while the darkness was so intense at times that the life highway was called the valley of the shadow of death, nevertheless the night was despoiled of its dangers, because God had given man a light by which he might safely pick his way :

“ Thy Word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.” God’s Word meant the same essential thing to him that it does to us ; only we have more of it than he poor soul could know, and it gives a better light. The Word of God that he knew compared with the Word that we know is like the candle of our forefathers compared with the arc-light of to-day. For while he had Moses and the Prophets, we have them, but we have also the Epistles of St. Paul and the Gospels of Jesus Christ. My subject, therefore, this morning is, the Holy Bible as a lantern to our feet and a light for our paths.

I doubt, though, if many Christian people to-day find this lantern satisfactory. To some I fear it seems unsatisfying and old-fashioned. To talk about the Bible as the real guide of life must seem to many like an attempt to go back to the days of stage coaches and tallow candles. But I am persuaded that the fault lies, not in the Holy Scriptures but in our use of those immortal treasures.

For, in the first place, nobody uses them enough, and many virtually do not use them at all. It is evident what the condition is from the fact that many candidates for Holy Orders could not give an adequate or correct account of the Life of David, or the missionary journeys of St. Paul. The lantern is hung up in the barn, there is no oil in the reservoir, the wick is short and untrimmed, and cobwebs have made the glass opaque. The great trouble is that the Bible is used so little. There is still a certain reverence for it ; it still commands a great sale ; most people like to possess a copy ; but inspiration for daily living is not steadily drawn from within its covers. It gives no light, not because it lacks illuminating power, but because the current is not turned on.

Nevertheless I feel no inclination to find fault with this condition, with this sad neglect of a much needed light for human footsteps. For we are to a large degree creatures of our environment, and still more of what the Germans call

the *Zeitgeist*, which, as nearly as it can be put in English, means *the spirit of the age*. Everybody else has left off Bible reading, and we do too. But why did people leave off so extensively the good old practice of the devotional use of the Holy Scriptures? I think the causes are mainly three.

The first is that the Bible became too unintelligible. Readers found themselves in the situation of the Ethiopian proselyte whom Philip met on the road to Gaza. This servant of the Egyptian court was riding along in his chariot and was spending his time reading the Old Testament—the Bible of his day. Philip asked him the question, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” and the poor seeker after God could only reply, “How can I, except someone shall guide me?” Philip explained to him the passage over which he had been so sorely puzzled, with the splendid result that the inquirer was baptized in the name of the Christ Whose story he had been unconsciously reading. Now Christian readers found themselves as much in the dark as that Ethiopian, and there being no Philip sent to them to open the mysteries of a great collection of books in which there are many things hard to understand, they have closed the book and laid it aside; and as they ride in trains or automobiles, they read the newspaper which they do understand, or a novel which they do enjoy, or it may be a book on some kind of new thought which seems to bring them up to date.

But, it may be objected, our fathers read the Bible faithfully—did they understand it better than we? No, as a matter of fact they did not understand it as well. While the Bible has lain untouched on table or shelf in the home, an immense amount of light has come with the modern discoveries in archæology and literary criticism which has made that book more intelligible than ever before. But our forebears were less critical than we are; they were more easily satisfied; and they had a deeper

piety ; so they read with a belief, perhaps not wholly without foundation, that they would derive some spiritual nourishment even though there were many things they could not fathom. We on the other hand find neither pleasure nor profit in reading what we do not comprehend.

The second reason is the vast amount of other reading matter that is poured from the presses to-day. Think what it means that a daily paper has a circulation of a million copies. Then think of the ever increasing number of magazines, some with an enormous circulation. And think of the innumerable books which are published yearly. A person can hardly keep acquaintance even with the titles of the new best sellers. In Dickens' time everybody knew him and read him. But with the competition of our age, there is scarcely a living writer with whom all intelligent people have a reading acquaintance. The world-weary and pessimistic author of Ecclesiastes said that in his days "of making many books there is no end ; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." I wonder to what depths his despair would go if he could take a look into a modern bookshop.

Not only is there this vast body of reading matter, but much of it is very alluring to the tired or excited or surfeited by its very lightness. And then unfortunately this very easy reading has a terrible tendency to unfit one for anything substantial or serious. The Bible seems pretty dull to one who has long been getting his mental nourishment with so little intellectual effort. We become somewhat like children fed so constantly on cakes that we care no more for bread and meat.

The third reason, and perhaps the most significant of all, is the changed view about the Bible due to modern critical investigation. The official designation is "the Holy Bible," but we for the most part leave "holy" out of the title. People once made a fetish of this book. The Protestant Reformation broke away from an infallible Pope, because the Reformers no longer believed in his

infallibility. But men love the voice of authority, and so it happened in the course of time that the demand for this quality led to the setting up of the Scriptures as an infallible book of divine authority in every line and word.

Then came the age of modern criticism. For a long time everything else was critically sifted, and the foundations of belief were shaken. Then the time came when this sacred treasure was forced to submit to the critical processes. That must needs have been. For the claim had always been made that belief was to rest on evidence. Naturally the evidence offered must be scrutinized to see whether it was good or bad.

The result of applying scientific methods of study to the Bible has indeed been revolutionary. People of this age demand to understand what they read. The old interpretation was swept away, and to many it seemed that chaos had returned to the earth. Less than ever could people work their way through the confusing maze. Confidence in the Bible's infallibility was impaired or destroyed. The people knew not what was true and what was false, and so they followed the natural course and closed the volume and laid it aside. If now and again they took it up and brushed the dust from its covers, it was not with the old soul-satisfying idea that the pure Voice of the Holy Spirit spoke in its pages. The treasure—if treasure there was—was contained in earthen vessels. The reading people contented themselves with the surer pastimes of light literary nourishment.

Such are, I think, the chief causes accountable for the present disuse of the Bible. The condition is unfortunate, but surely now the night of transition is far spent; the day of a new understanding is at hand; and it is high time that all Christian people awaked out of their sleep, and began to read the Bible flooded as it is by light in the dawn of a new day.

But the question naturally arises, What is one to do who craves light for his life's highway, but, like the

Ethiopian, is obliged to confess, How can I understand except someone guide me? To such persons I offer at least a hint.

In reading the Bible one is apt to be so puzzled over the difficult and non-essential parts that the real substance is not discovered. Therefore it is important to seek for the vital and eternal truth, and the layman is as competent to recognize that as the scholar. The novice might not understand the construction or the origin of the lantern which he carries in his hand, but he can walk as steadily by its clear rays as any lampmaker that ever lived.

Let me illustrate by a single example. Take the familiar story of Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to put to a severe test the question whether Jehovah or Baal was God. Each party was to build an altar, place the slain animal on it, and depend upon its god to furnish the fire. The great crowd of Baal worshippers did as agreed. They called upon their god from morning until noon, but not a spark of fire was kindled in the wood. Then towards evening Elijah was ready. To make his proof decisive, three times he ordered water to drench the wood upon which his victim lay. Then the Prophet poured out his fervent prayer, "O, Jehovah, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant . . . that this people may know that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire from Heaven fell, burning the sacrifice, the wood, the water in the trench, and even the stones out of which the altar was built.

There the reader is apt to stumble and, in his bewilderment, say, How could fire burn the stones?—and he is so puzzled by this obstacle that he goes no further. But suppose he ignores the frame and looks at the picture. Is there anywhere a more striking story of a great faith that God would hear His servant? Is there easily found a more daring effort to win an apostate people back to

their God ? There is after all some light in the old story, and it is a kind of light badly needed in our walking to-day. That sets forth a principle, and one that will serve in many other difficult parts of the Holy Book. For there are few passages, however they bristle with hard problems, which do not contain some grains of eternal truth.

The Office which we are about to continue, dear brethren, reminds us that there is another Word of God. The Fourth Gospel begins, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Coming of that Word we gratefully commemorate in this season of Advent. That Word, the Eternal Son, is also a lantern to our footsteps, and He gives the purest light of all. As we gather at the Holy Table to-day may our lives be so illuminated by the Light of the World that we shall never diverge from the straight path, and our footsteps never falter. Let us indeed cast off the darkness of the world, and walk in the daylight of God's Holy Word, and of the revelation through Jesus Our Lord.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM F. PELTON, M.A.

ST. MATTHEW xi. 4.

“Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see.”

THE student of History should endeavour to fathom character and discern motives ; otherwise his subject will appear to consist only of a series of narratives, more or less interesting, in some cases thrilling, but interspersed with chapters that are either intolerably dull or hopelessly enigmatical. By this means every page will glow with some kind of interest, and the enigmas will be reduced to a select few, such as Mary Queen of Scots, Charles I., and the Duke of Marlborough. Of no figure in History is this more true than of John the Baptist, at any rate as regards the enigma which he presents, at one time publicly proclaiming his Cousin, Jesus of Nazareth, as the Lamb of God with the highest degree of confidence ; at another sending a pitiful message to Him, evidently under the impression that he had made a great mistake. What we need is to understand his character, and discern his motive.

St. John the Baptist was a great preacher who drew vast crowds after him, and to whom they confessed their

sins ; hence he may be regarded also in the light of a teacher. Now teachers are, roughly speaking, of two kinds : those who are competent to instruct brilliant and advanced pupils, and those who are better fitted to deal with beginners and dullards. Of course, it is not at all uncommon to meet with those who combine both characteristics, e.g., the University professor who can hold the attention of a popular audience, but such all-round teachers are, on the whole, exceptional ; more generally they lack the inclination to stoop to the level of the beginner, and have no patience with the dullard.

Now John belonged to the class that delights in the brilliant pupil. Did he not detect what we may term for present purposes his Cousin's genius, not only long before anyone else, except possibly the Virgin Mary, had the least idea of it ? but he did so to a degree that no one else approached by a very long way all through Gospel history. His nearest competitor was the Apostle Peter, on whom his Master conferred a special blessing in reward for a confession made after nearly three years' constant intercourse, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But Peter almost in the same hour had exhibited his total inability to grasp the mysterious truth of suffering and death awaiting his Master, a truth which John had made the kernel of his message, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And Our Lord thought so seriously of Peter's lack of perception that He rebuked him as an agent of the devil himself in exactly the same words as He had repulsed His great spiritual Tempter in the wilderness. It was, indeed, John's ability to recognize his Cousin's nature and mission that aroused Our Lord's enthusiasm to declare : "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

John, however, was not one of those all-round teachers who possess patience to deal with beginners and dullards. It is quite true that they came to him in large numbers,

and that he gave them suitable elementary counsel—the soldier not to commit violence, the publican not to practise extortion, and so on. Quite true also that John could not possibly have done better than he did by stopping short at this point and directing his inquirers to Christ: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” But other parts of his address on the banks of Jordan reveal his shortcomings. He spoke of the tree being cut down at the roots; but he had no notion of its being spared for a time, of digging about it and dunging it in hopes of its yielding fruit. All his hearers were either wheat or chaff, who were to be separated by the winnowing fan, with a view to the chaff being destroyed with unquenchable fire. Moreover, he gave no hint of any postponement of the sentence: “*Now* is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” John, in fact, closely resembled his great antitype, Elijah, not only in respect of the girdle he wore and the food he ate, not only in respect of the stern call that he made for Israel to repent, but also in respect of impatience. Even after the massacre of the prophets of Baal, Elijah had fled away into the wilderness—to escape the vengeance of Jezebel certainly, but in a fit of despondency and perplexity as well at wickedness being still the dominant power in the land.

Now what was Elijah’s experience in the wilderness? He heard a great and strong wind which rent the rocks; he saw an earthquake, and then a fire—phenomena which must have reminded him, as indeed was intended, of the violent work of destruction which had only just taken place, and which, no doubt, he wished should continue uninterruptedly; but they now conveyed to him no idea of the presence of God. At last he heard a still, small

voice, which prepared him for hearkening to the Lord when He proceeded to reveal to His Prophet the measured steps which He intended subsequently to take one by one in order to root out wickedness from the land—but not on that day, or the next. It was His Will that agents should be appointed, and be formally invested with authority for the work of vengeance.

In the same way did God deal with His servant John ; and the details of the Baptist's experience agree in a remarkable manner with those of Elijah's. John, too, had bearded a wicked king ; John was providentially directed into the wilderness, though by different means, not in his case as a terrified refugee, but as a captive in the gloomy fortress of Machaerus ; John was there harassed by doubts as to the supremacy of God, the triumph of good over evil ; John finally was vouchsafed the same kind of message, which virtually meant, "Wait in patience, God is not slack concerning His promises."

What was the exact message ? "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear ; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." What did he understand by these words ? Surely something more than the obvious fact, well known to him as to everybody else, viz., that miracles were being performed, which awakened universal wonder ; rather, according to their meaning as signs, that the same Almighty power was abroad to give sight and hearing to the spiritually blind and deaf, to cleanse the spiritually unclean, to give spiritual life to those who were dead in trespasses and sins. John, moreover, had been unable to discern any interval between grace and judgment ; he lacked the patience to do anything but preach repentance, and then expect wrath immediately to fall on the impenitent. Jesus began by proclaiming the arrival of "the acceptable year of the

Lord "; and not until He had been virtually rejected and persecution had actually begun did He allude to "the day of vengeance of Our God."

When Our Lord eulogized John so highly as to place him at the head almost of the whole human race, He qualified His eulogy by mentioning exceptions: "notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." We have discovered a blemish in John's character, viz., a lack of that patience which was so conspicuous in Our Lord. We might fathom his character deeper, and say that he was deficient in love. No criticism, perhaps, would appear to be more unjust of a man who devoted his whole life to the reformation of his fellows, even to the point of imprisonment and death. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there is the strongest possible contrast between John's greeting of Pharisees and Sadducees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" and Our Lord's universal invitations, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Such a contrast must induce us, at any rate, to admit that John's love was not of that tender, winning kind required to bring some kinds of hardened sinners to their knees. That this inquiry is perfectly relevant appears from St. Paul's analysis of love which shows that love is the source of patience: "Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . is not easily provoked . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." If John had possessed more love, he would have shown more patience, and would not have been afflicted with doubts at the last.

Now love is the distinguishing feature above all others of the children of the Kingdom. "Beloved," writes another St. John, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." He then that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven—

in other words, he that possesses this most divine of all graces in however small a degree—is greater, Our Lord declares, even than that great Prophet whom He had placed otherwise at the head of all other members of the human race

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

JOY AND PEACE IN THE ADVENT OF CHRIST

BY THE REVEREND FREDERICK ARTHUR CLARKE, M.A.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 5, 6.

"Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious."

IN to-day's beautiful Epistle the thoughts, like the notes of some lovely melody, follow a course of subtle and sometimes unexpected change, yet with a "linked sweetness" which leaves in the mind a wonderful sense of unity.

The passage begins with joy: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." It ends—most fitly—with peace: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

It begins with joy and ends with peace. But between these two deeply and vitally related things, joy and peace, it brings in—in a very brief space—a number of varied topics which to a careless view might seem to have little to do with one another: the exhortation to moderation or forbearance; the reminder that the Lord is near; the counsel to put away anxious thought and have recourse to prayer with thanksgiving.

The word translated "moderation," or "forbearance," is almost a technical term in Greek moral philosophy for equity, that which judges not by hard and fast rules, not with the rigour of the law, but with due considerateness,

allowance, the finer spirit of justice, a thing more just than justice itself, because, as is often said, the extreme of justice is often extreme injustice. And so the word comes to be used for the temper which does not insist upon the letter of the law or its own claims, does not stand upon its rights or its dignity, but is considerate, reasonable, forbearing. Matthew Arnold speaks of it as almost the characteristic quality of Our Lord, and would translate or paraphrase it as "sweet reasonableness." And this quality, the Apostle says, all men are to see manifested in the life of Christians—not, of course, that Christians are to make a display of it, but men of the world in their dealings with them are to find them free from contentiousness, hardness, self-assertion, forbearing, gentle, readier to endure than to inflict injustice.

"The Lord is at hand." That is the burden of Advent, its triumphant cry, or its glad yet solemn whisper. And this thought, so constantly on the lips and in the heart of the Apostle—it is easy to see how it helps to enforce the duty of gentleness and forbearance in dealing with our fellow-men. Is a Christian tempted to try to avenge himself on one who has done him wrong? He is at hand Who has said, "Vengeance is Mine: I will repay." The Judge is at the gate. Is he inclined to bear hardly on another whom the law has put in his power, to be severe, exacting, harsh? One is at hand Who will measure out to him the measure he has meted to his neighbour, and Who will inflict judgment without mercy on him who showed no mercy.

But there is yet another way—less obvious—in which the thought of Christ's Second Coming should make men forbearing and gentle, less inclined to insist on their rights. The Gospel is not the Law. It does not simply forbid under penalties certain kinds of conduct. It aims at taking away the motives for wrong-doing by breathing into the soul higher and purer affections than it has by nature.

And what is the chief cause of men's contentiousness, their harshness with one another, their keenness to take every possible advantage? It is their eager craving for the good things of this world, its advantages and pleasures. It is as St. James says: "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from your lusts?"—your selfishness and greed. But the thought, "The Lord is at hand," writes "vanity" on all those earthly goods for which men contend so hotly. For all who love His appearing, their attractiveness fades away as the stars die at the rising of the sun.

I feel sure that is the connexion in St. Paul's mind, because he goes on immediately to say, "Be careful for nothing," i.e., "In nothing be anxious." There is nothing on the surface to suggest this thought. It shows what is beneath the surface. The thought that links all together is that the Advent of Christ will set in their true light, reveal in their true value, the things for which we contend so fiercely, and crave with such anxious eagerness. Are we possessed of the desire for the enjoyments and blessings of this life? Then, it may be, we shall be resolute and fierce in asserting our claims, insisting on our rights and as much more as we can get. Or, if we feel our own powerlessness, we shall be tormented with envious and jealous thoughts of those more successful than ourselves. Or, if our happiness seems threatened, not by some human rival, but by the decree of God's righteous will, then we shall be filled with anxiety, with torturing care: we shall be tempted to despondency, even—it may be—to sullenness and rebellion.

God will not despise the sorrows and anxieties even of such weak, wayward, faithless hearts as ours. We may cast our care on Him, for He careth for us. We may turn to Him in prayer and supplication, and make our requests known to Him. And His Peace, the Peace of God, the peace He is wont to bestow, will alight upon the citadel of our heart like some mighty Angel warder, calm in

his glorious strength, and keep far from us all that may imperil or disturb.

An Angel warder? nay, it is Jesus Christ Himself. Apart from Him, outside of Him, there is no true peace. He is our Peace, the Peace of God. And He is at hand to deliver us. For He is the Redeemer of His servants, not only in the dread day of final judgment, but amid all the trials and dangers of our mortal life.

"The Lord is at hand." And to-day the words bring not only thoughts of judgment or warnings that earthly things are soon to pass away. On this Sunday before Christmas they make a gentler appeal. They tell us of a Coming not in terror but in meekness and mercy. They call us to welcome and adore our Brother, our Saviour. They bid us "*Rejoice in the Lord.*" They teach us that joy, no less than fear, may be a power to purify and redeem, to lift us above base temptations and deliver us from the selfish lusts that make this earth such a scene of jealousy and strife. It is not enough to be taught the worthlessness of merely selfish joys. We need to learn the blessedness of that joy in the Lord which can gather up unto itself whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, of good report.

Earthly joys, brief and troubled at best, leave behind them, when they fade, dissatisfaction, unrest, the bitterness of regret, even if it be not also of remorse and shame. Joy in the Lord broadens and deepens and grows calm in the peace of God which passeth all understanding. May this joy in the Lord be ours in the blessed Christmastide. We shall only be capable of it as we earnestly endeavour to overcome within us all restless self-seeking, all peevish self-pity, all meanness of jealousy and envy. God grant us to learn something of the spirit of self-forgetting brotherliness from Him Who comes to bless and to save, and to be taught gentleness by the gentleness of God.

CHRISTMAS EVE

MAKE ROOM FOR CHRIST

BY THE REVEREND CLEMENT L. COLDWELL, M.A.

ST. LUKE ii. 7.

“There was no room for them in the inn.”

WHEN Our Blessed Lord took upon Him to deliver man and to be born of a Virgin Mother, it was His Will to be born of the Royal House of David. It was the fulfilment of promises made long before to David, and gave a reason, too, why the chosen people—His own people—should receive and welcome Him. But to show us the true value of earthly pomp and show and wealth, and to warn people against caring and thinking too much about such things, He chose to come at a time when David's family had come down in the world and was poor and unknown. And so it was that when His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph reached Bethlehem, the City of David—their own city, since they belonged to the House and Family of David—they could find no admission, “No room for them in the inn.” There were so many other people pressing into the city for the same purpose as themselves, that the inn was full.

Thus it was that, being too poor to pay for a lodging elsewhere, or too humble to be cared for and looked after by others, they had to find shelter in a stable, and that stable a mere rocky cave.

Yet that stable at Bethlehem, poor and humble as it was, was chosen by Him as a fitting place for Him Who in

after years had not where to lay His head. The rest of His life was in harmony with this beginning. He might have come, had He so willed, moving the heavens and shaking the earth, surrounded with all the marks of His Divine Majesty and Power ; but Jesus came not to destroy, but to save. Jesus came to overthrow men's thoughts of earthly greatness, and to bring down man's pride. He became not only Man, but poor among men, and chose a poor mother, and a manger for a cradle. Thus did He set His special mark of favour upon poverty and hardship.

Old writers delighted to find a spiritual meaning in the various circumstances connected with the place of Our Lord's Birth. Bethlehem, they said, means the House of Bread, to tell us that He Who is the Bread of Life is come down from Heaven, to feed the souls of His people. He was born in a strange place, and in the stable of an inn, to remind us that we are strangers and sojourners on earth, and have no abiding city here, but should be seeking one to come. He was enrolled, written down among men, in a census of the Empire, as a token that He was about to enrol men in His Kingdom that ruleth over all in the Book of Life in Heaven. And even the fact of His finding no room in the inn, they thought, is meant to remind us by way of contrast of the exceeding mercy of Christ in preparing room for all in the many mansions of His Father's House.

A bare, rocky cave, then, the resting place of ox and ass, was the only shelter which the Holy Family could obtain at such a time of need.

If those people of Bethlehem could only have known Who they really were who applied to them for shelter, how gladly would they have opened their doors to them, how earnestly would they have striven among themselves for the inconceivable honour of having the Son of God born under their roof !

But, as it was, they would not, or could not, receive

Him. One day—if not already—they will be amazed and grieved to think of the greatness of their loss. But it was the Will of Christ to be born in Bethlehem, whether the people of Bethlehem were inclined to receive Him or not. And, therefore, when the houses were closed to Him, He took refuge in a public stable. There in the outhouse of a common inn, and in the darkness of the night, Christ was born. Then human eyes were first permitted to behold that great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the Flesh—and the only begotten Son of God—only begotten in the substance of His Godhead, became in His human nature the First-born and only Son of His Mother. “She brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.”

Let us dwell on this most wonderful thing, that the Saviour of the World was born in a stable because there was no room for Him in the inn. Let us not be satisfied to feel surprise or indignation at the conduct of the people of Bethlehem; but let us consider whether it may not be in some degree a likeness and pattern of our own. How often do we show by our actions that we too have not any room for Christ? When men say, for example, that they have no time for prayer, that they cannot afford to keep Christ's Commandments strictly, that it will be time enough to be in earnest and serious when they are older and have had their fling—what is this but in effect to follow the example of the people at Bethlehem who shut out Christ from their homes and forced Him to take shelter in the stable of an inn?

Think of it, too, as regards this special season at which we have now arrived. *Now* at this holy Christmas time, by the great and wonderful things which we are commemorating, by the solemn histories which we shall hear and read, by the special call to our Christmas Communion, Christ our Saviour does, in an especial manner, knock at the door of our hearts. We cannot help hearing Him. We

cannot help feeling that there is an especial call on us to remember how Christ was born to save us from our sins, and to win for us an entrance into the very presence of God in Heaven, and not to remember these things only, but to give thanks for them with all our hearts, not with our lips only, but in our lives.

We cannot help having Christmas in our minds. We think of the comforts, the refreshments, the innocent pleasures which it brings with it. From our earliest remembrance it has been associated with pleasant and happy and kindly thoughts. But let us get a true answer to this question—a plain question, but one which matters a great deal to us—When I have thought of and looked forward to Christmas, have I really thought of Christ—Christ born to be the Saviour of the world and of me, my Saviour from my sins?—or is it that I have had plenty of room in my heart for thoughts connected with the worldly enjoyments and pleasures which Christmas commonly brings with it, but I have had no room for my Saviour Himself—no room for a true and thankful remembrance of all that He has done for me?

We think it strange perhaps that Almighty God should suffer the Bethlehemites thus to refuse admission to their Lord and King coming to be born among them, but surely we have much more to wonder at in His forbearance and longsuffering towards Christians, for *they know* how near Christ has come to them, and yet close the door of their hearts against Him. When Christ comes again and summons them to meet Him—when He asks how it was they were so negligent in their prayers and Communions, so careless about strict obedience to His laws, so wanting in real love to Him, and in reverence for His Will—will they say—will they *dare* to say—that they really had no room for Him, that the world and worldly occupations and worldly pleasures of necessity took up so much of their time and thoughts and affections that there was no space left for Him?

God grant that may not be so with us ; but that at all times and in all places—we may have room for Christ.

Especially let us be very much afraid and very much ashamed of shutting Him out of our hearts at this time. Now at least let us seek to gather up some thoughts of love, some feeling of gratitude and devotion towards Our Saviour, Who thus humbled Himself for us.

Let it not be said by our conscience, and by our great Accuser at the Last Day, that even at the blessed time of our Saviour's Birth, when outwardly we seemed to be offering up our thanks to Him, we had really no room for Him in our hearts. Let each one of us open the door, and that widely, to Him, and pray Him to come and abide with us. Let us pray Him in earnest to come to us, and He Who did not disdain the hard manger and cold stable will not despise even our ruined and stony hearts. And if He come to us, He will repair what is broken down, and soften what is cold and hard, and make us fit to be His dwelling place.

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

BY THE REVEREND HENRY V. DER H. COWELL, B.A.

ST. LUKE ii. 15.

"Let us go now even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass."

So said one to another some poor shepherds who were watching their flocks amid the chill dews of a winter's night, in a field about a mile from Bethlehem.

To these simple men heralds had sped from Heaven to tell the glad story of the Saviour's Birth.

God is ever wont to make known at first to a few elect souls the great discoveries of Himself which He would have spread abroad. And these men had been chosen to receive the first tidings of the Coming of the long-expected Messiah. As they followed their humble calling, the flash of an Angel's wings had greeted their eyes, and the silence which reigned about them had been broken by the announcement: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy," etc. Then this visitant from the skies had been joined by a choir of sweet singers from the Courts above who had chanted together the grand words, "Glory to God in the highest," etc.

And these words had fallen on prepared ears, and had touched responsive hearts. For these men had cherished in their secret souls an earnest longing for the hope of Israel. They were ignorant men, who had received little or no instruction from Hebrew rabbis, but they had

nurtured their faith with frequent communings with God. So He Who hides Himself from the wise and prudent but discovers Himself to the lowly in heart had made known to them the great event which had just transpired in the stable of a village khan, at a little distance from them.

And, like the great Apostle afterwards, they were "not disobedient to the heavenly vision." They acted at once on the intimation given to them. Encouraging one another, as we ought to do, they left their flocks in the little plain, and sped their way to the cradle of the new-born Christ, and, bowing in lowly reverence before Him, offered Him the homage which is always acceptable to Him—the homage of devout hearts.

Let us follow them in thought "up the terraced hill and through the moonlit gardens of Bethlehem" to "the summit of the grey ridge on which the little town is built," and entering, in imagination, the limestone grotto, littered with straw, where cattle closely huddle, let us gaze on the wondrous spectacle which they beheld.

"Let us go now even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass," first, that our faith in Holy Scripture may be strengthened thereby.

It is a strange scene to which the Gospel narrative brings us. On the floor of an unclean cavern, on a bed of straw, lies a peasant woman, and in a manger close by is laid a new-born Babe. No halo is about His head. No outward tokens bespeak His dignity. Yet this Child, we are told, is "Immanuel—God with us." That Babe lying there in meanest circumstances is the Redeemer of mankind.

Can such a story have been invented by the ingenuity of man? Is it not clean contrary to our sense of the fitness of things? Is it not entirely different from the expectations cherished by the chosen people? Does it not violate all pre-conceived ideas? Would any myth have shaped itself after this manner?

No. This can be no outcome of human fancy. Still

less can it be the product of fraudulent purpose. The story bears on the surface the evidence of its own truthfulness. It is too alien from human ideas to have been evolved from the minds of the Evangelists. It has the stamp of genuineness. It furnishes strong proof of the reliability of the Gospel records.

And at the same time it sets its seal on the Old Testament also. For it verifies one of its most remarkable predictions.

Seven hundred years before the event, Micah had exclaimed, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." And in how marvellous a way had this proved true. How strangely had it come to pass that Our Lord was born in Bethlehem rather than in Nazareth the residence of His Virgin Mother. Think from what curious coincidences this had resulted. Judea was at the time included in the vast dominions of the Roman Empire. And the Emperor thought the existence of Universal Peace a favourable opportunity for gathering statistics of the population and resources of the various provinces of his dominion. Accordingly he issued an edict ordering a general census to be taken. And that edict was sent to Judea, among other places, to be executed. That country was not yet reduced to the condition of a Roman province, but Herod, although nominally an independent king, had to obey the behests of the Roman Emperor. In doing so, however, he followed Jewish instead of Imperial usage and so gave instructions that every family should repair to the seat of its tribe where its genealogical records were kept. And, in obedience to this direction, Joseph and Mary, being both of the house and lineage of David, were obliged to betake themselves to Bethlehem. So, by his edict, Augustus unwittingly brought about the fulfilment of this ancient prophecy.

Thus the Birth of Our Blessed Lord at Bethlehem shows that this prophecy of Old Testament was written under Divine inspiration. And, for the reasons which I have given, the Old Testament and the New are both authenticated by the narrative before us, and our faith in Holy Scripture is confirmed by the scene to which it conducts us.

But again I would say to you, "Let us go now even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass," that our hearts may be cheered by the glad event which is there witnessed.

In a celebrated picture called "The Night" light is made to emanate from the Infant Christ, and to shed its bright rays around. And this is no mere fiction, no mere invention of the painter's fancy. Light does stream from the Person of this new-born Child, and spread through the surrounding gloom. Behold it, and bask in its gracious beams.

It shines to gladden us with the blessed truth that a Great Deliverer has come to conquer sin and Satan, the worst foes of mankind, and to lead us on to glorious victory, if we will but follow Him and fight manfully beneath His banner. It shines, too, to give us happy evidence that God is very near us in our sorrows and sufferings and very quick to feel our afflictions. For the Incarnation has bridged over the chasm between earth and Heaven. It has brought God into the very centre of our humanity. So that we dare not think of Him as calmly seated in superb glory, at a distance from us. We dare not suppose that He views with indifferent eye human agonies. We dare not imagine that He will allow events that affect the welfare of the world and the progress of His Kingdom of righteousness to work out their issues without His intervention. Nay, we are bound to believe the very opposite of this. We are bound to assure our hearts that He Who as at this time was made Man is quick to feel our every woe, and reigns on high to right the

wrong, and to work out Divine purposes of good for mankind.

Moreover, the light which gleams from the cradle of the Redeemer should waken in us happy visions of universal peace.

"On earth peace" was part of the sweet carol that was chanted by Angel voices over the fields of Bethlehem. And, although that part of their lovely song finds present fulfilment in the inward peace which dwells in trustful hearts through the sense which they enjoy of pardon for their sins, and through the inner harmony to which their nature is attuned, this partial fulfilment does not exhaust its rich promise. Jesus is "the Prince of Peace" in a wider sense; and we may hope that by and by men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; and that all mankind shall dwell together in holy brotherhood. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet: therefore strife and sorrow shall one day be banished from our earth, and all men shall live together in happy concord.

Thus, by our visit to Bethlehem, let us cheer our hearts by the remembrance that Christ came to our earth to relieve us from the beleaguering hosts of evil that encompassed us, to give us plainest proof of Divine interest in human concerns and control over them, and to bring about, ultimately, universal peace.

But, once more, I would say to you, "Let us go now even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass," that our love to the Redeemer may be quickened by the sight of the humiliations which He endured for us.

Circumstances more abject, or more devoid of comfort, than those in which the Christ was born it would be impossible to conceive. Crowded out of the caravanserai, no lodging was found for His tender frame save that of a poor stable, so there we see Him lie cradled in the feeding place for cattle, scooped out of the hard rock. Yet He Who stooped to this low condition had come from the

bosom of the Eternal Father and from that resplendent state which surpasses our highest imaginings. He Who was content to be treated with this human indifference was wont to be surrounded by seraphim and cherubim chanting continually the Divine praise. Oh, what love, what wondrous love, drew Him down to our chill earth, and made Him willing to endure so great privations and dishonours.

Surely such love should fill us with amazement, and should waken in us responsive love in return.

Let us then try to stimulate and express the love that we ought to feel—if we have not already done so—at His altar this morning. And let us give proof of that love by ministering at this time, for His sake, to those whose estate of poverty He condescended to share.

There are not a few in our midst whose circumstances are almost parallel with His ; who, meanly housed in dreary dwellings, with little to brighten their lives, are lacking the commonest comforts ; and there are some who have sunk to this condition, which makes it harder still.

Let us relieve their distresses to the utmost of our ability. Then He Who endured so much for us, seated in glory shall say to us one day : “ Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.”

ST. STEPHEN, ST. JOHN, INNOCENTS

THE CHRISTMAS SAINTS' DAYS

BY THE REVEREND FRANCIS WILLIAM CHRISTIE, M.A.

REVELATION xvii. 6.

"Martyrs of Jesus."

CHRISTMAS DAY is immediately followed by three Holy Days—St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents. We are still gazing with the shepherds upon the new-born Babe and His Maiden Mother, when we are called on to look at the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, surrounded by an angry crowd who crush him to death with heavy stones ; and next we are reminded of St. John the Evangelist, whose life of martyrdom was prolonged far beyond that of his fellow-apostles ; and then we are snatched back to the days of our Lord's Infancy and witness the cruel slaughter of the Innocent children at Bethlehem by the command of Herod. How is it that the Church, in arranging the order of the Christian Year, has set these three Holy Days immediately after Our Lord's Nativity ?

If we look at the other two great Festivals, Easter and Whitsunday, we shall see that they are each followed by special days which prolong them and carry on the thoughts appropriate to the Festival. Easter Monday and Tuesday and Whit-Monday and Tuesday are as it were an extension of the Easter and Whitsun Festivals, giving us time to think about the greatness and the consequences of Our Lord's Resurrection, and the Coming of the Holy Ghost.

In the same way it is likely that the three days after Christmas are set there as being in some sense an extension of the Christmas Festival to help us to realize the surpassing greatness of the Coming of Christ into the world. If at first it seems to us incongruous to turn from Christ's Manger Throne to witness St. Stephen's martyrdom, it is because we have been overlooking the notes of suffering that we see in the surroundings of the Babe of Bethlehem. We are accustomed to dwell, and rightly to dwell, on the joyous, peaceful, lovely aspects of Christ's Nativity. We hear the Angels carol their *Gloria*. But we forget the cost, the humiliation ; the cruel indifference of the Inn ; we forget to see even then how " He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

And so the Church, to remind us of this, has set these three martyrs' days after the Nativity. Christ comes into the world indeed " to raise the sons of earth," to make them sons of God, but it is at the cost of suffering to Himself and to them. There is a tendency to treat this Christmas Festival as if it were part of some sweet vision quite unconnected with the real world in which men live and work and suffer and die. Is it not the case that for many Christians Christmas simply means gaieties, dinners, dances, Christmas trees, the Pantomime? All they associate with Christmas is this fairyland in which the real facts of life are all forgotten. God forbid that Christmas should ever cease to be a time of happiness and kindness, but Christmas mirth should be Christian mirth. We must not forget the great Event of the Day, the greatest event of all time, the Birth of the Saviour Who arouses at once the love of His disciples and the hostility of the world, Who calls us to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to suffer with Him ; and Who promises us rewards greater than the world can bestow.

It is as a wholesome corrective to some unwholesome ways of regarding Christmastide that the Church sets

before us these three real scenes of mingled joy and suffering that follow Christmas Day. Christ's Birth was a real event in a very real world of sin and sorrow, and has real issues. For Him men lived and died.

St. Stephen was called on to suffer for Christ in the sharp, short agony of stoning. But we shall do wrong to think only of the agony. Stephen is a glorious instance of the spiritual height to which the power of Christ can raise sinful men. To be full of such light and joy that his face shone like an Angel's—to see Heaven open and Jesus standing above to protect him—to die with words of faith and love on his lips—was that not a glory in which the sharp pain of martyrdom disappears?

And then St. John—not like St. Stephen called away in the fulness of strength, but living on and on—seeing the old world of his youth pass away; seeing Jerusalem and the Temple perish in flames and bloodshed; enduring persecution at the hands of Nero and Domitian; surviving all his old companions, who one by one pass away and he is left behind—the last who could say “I saw, I heard, and my hands touched the Word made Flesh.” But though called on thus to suffer for Christ, he was called to far greater heights of spiritual joy. Like Stephen he beheld Heaven opened, and saw the coming victory of Christ. But a greater gift was given him than to behold the Apocalypse. He was inspired to write that Gospel wherein the very mind of Christ is revealed to us.

In the Holy Innocents we see how Christ has suffering followers even among children. These little ones truly suffered for the sake of Christ. Too young to know good from evil, they were called upon to suffer the hostility of Herod. And the Church has placed them among the Saints. She remembered the words of Our Lord—“It is not the Will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.” One of the most mysterious things in the world is the death of little children, who just dip into this world as it were for a moment, and then are

called by God. They have their leaders in these Holy Innocents, who were called so young to suffer and to die, and are now in the Paradise of God.

Thus these three Holy Days, which prolong and illustrate the Christmas Festival, speak to us of the consequences of Christ's Birth into this world. Christ's Advent shook the world to its foundations. The world was against Him from the first, and His followers found the world against them. St. Stephen, St. John, and the Innocents found the world against them. Yet the reward of following Christ was greater than the suffering.

These three Saints' Days also seem to speak of the infinite variety of service which Christ demands. Childhood, the vigour of maturity and old age are all represented. St. Stephen's vigorous manhood and glorious end which has become one of the most famous examples of heroism ; St. John's patient life ending no one knows exactly where or when ; the short lives and untimely death of the Innocents—all ministered to Christ. Human lots vary infinitely. Long lives, brief lives : healthy, suffering : rich, poor : learned, simple : all are called on to take their place in Christ's army—to be raised by Him to the adoption of sons, and to be rewarded among His Saints in glory everlasting.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY

MAN'S NECESSITY—GOD'S OPPORTUNITY

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS SAUNDERS EVANS, D.D.

GALATIANS iv. 4.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.”

THE entrance of Christianity into history was a most momentous event. It was, in fact, the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. It was a great idea of someone (Dionysius Exiguus) to date our era from the Birth of the Saviour, this being called the year of Our Lord 19—. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, the Prophet and Priest and King of mankind is the grand centre and turning-point not only of chronology, but of all history, and the key to all its mysteries. All history *before* His Birth must be viewed as a preparation for His coming, and all history *after* His Birth as a means of establishing His Kingdom.

The patriarch Abraham lived some 2,000 years before the Birth of Christ. The religion of mankind had till his day continued to flow in a single stream ; but from Abraham the stream diverges into two channels—very unequal in their length and compass—Judaism and Heathenism. These two independent channels, after flowing apart for twenty centuries or more, meet and unite at last in Jesus Christ as the Fulfiller of all the types and prophecies and the common Saviour of all mankind.

As Christianity aims at the reconciliation and union of

God and man in Jesus Christ, so it was preceded by a twofold process of preparation—an approach of God to man, and an approach of man to God. In Judaism the preparation is direct and positive, proceeding from above downwards, from Heaven to earth, and ending in the Birth of the Messiah. In Heathenism this preparation is indirect and rather negative, proceeding from below upward, from earth to Heaven, and ending in a helpless cry of mankind for redemption of some kind or other.

In Judaism, again, we have a special revelation of the one true God, a revelation ever growing clearer and plainer until at last in the fulness of time the Divine Nature appears in the human to raise it into communion with God. In Heathenism man was guided indeed by the general providence of God and lighted by the glimmer of the Word, shining in the darkness, casting divine sparkles into the mind of an Aristotle or a Socrates ; yet he was unaided by direct revelation and left pretty much to his own ways, if haply he might feel after the Lord and find Him.

Heathenism may be compared to a long and dreary night, rather dark, yet not without the twinkling of stars, and waiting for the light of day ; Judaism resembles the blush of the dawn, full of the fresh hope and promise of the rising sun. Both the glimmering night of Paganism and the rosy dawn of Judaism gradually lose themselves in the golden rays and the steady blaze of Christianity slowly appearing above the world's horizon.

In the Hebrew people the true religion was prepared for man, just as among the Gentile nations man was prepared for the true religion. " Salvation," we read, " is of the Jews." This wonderful people was chosen by sovereign grace to be amongst the idolatrous nations of antiquity as a garden in the wilderness, as an oasis in the desert, enclosed and hedged round by the rigid fence of the moral and ceremonial law. To them belonged

Abraham the Father of the Faithful ; Moses the Law-giver ; the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant and the temple ; David the Monarch and David the Psalmist ; Isaiah the evangelist among the Prophets ; and, last but not least, nay, the greatest of all the princes of Israel except the members of the new Kingdom of Heaven, John the Baptist, the impersonation of all the worthies of the Old Testament, the friend and forerunner of the coming Messiah.

And yet, to all these noble privileges the chosen people did not respond : they did not answer the helm of their heavenly destiny : they fell miserably below the mark of their high calling : at the Birth of Christ they had grievously degenerated : their political status and their religious and moral condition were in glaring contrast to their divine mission.

As to their political status : Judea was now a Roman province : Princes of Idumea held the sceptre—only fancy, Idumean princes ; think of Esau and Jacob. This galling bondage the Pharisees and Chief Priests sorely resented. When Messiah should come, they said to one another, all this would be mended : He would crush the yoke of Rome and break the tyranny of Edom. Then Jerusalem would sit as a queen among the nations.

As to their religion : they were strict observers of an accumulated tradition ; scorers of the simple spirit of the Law, sticklers for the letter. A deep-seated immorality they gilded over and veneered with a pompous parade of singular sanctity, making their phylacteries broader and broader, embroidering the fringes of their robes with texts of Scripture, whitening and garnishing the tombs of the Prophets who had been murdered by their progenitors.

As to their morals : One indeed there was Who could read their hearts and did read them, and He called some of them an adulterous generation, a brood of vipers, doers of the works of their father the devil.

Nevertheless, for these Pharisees, such as they were, the fulness of the time was come, though it was not exactly the time of fulness for them. Yet for some of the Jewish people the harvest was ripe : for some it was a good time coming : even for the true Israel, for the spiritual children of Abraham, for John the Baptist, his parents and disciples, for Mary the Mother of Jesus and her kindred, for the venerable Simeon, for the prophetess Anna, for Lazarus and his pious sisters, and for others—but what were they among so many ?

As for the *heathen* nations of that critical turning-point in the world's history, we know that there were then two renowned races or peoples, the Greeks and the Romans. As to *their* political status : *Rome* was then the imperial mistress of the pagan world. By her arms she had conquered the nations of Europe, of Asia, and of Africa ; and by her laws she now governed them. But this extension of her imperial sway brought on her by degrees a moral paralysis. The domestic and civil virtues, which once so highly distinguished the Roman above the Greek, were in a rapid decline. Luxury, effeminacy, gluttony, avarice took the place of hardihood, manliness, patriotism, thriftiness. What had been the best side of their religion—belief in a future state of rewards and punishments—was fast dying out or fading away into a firm conviction that after death there was nothing at all but death : no life, no existence of any kind beyond the grave. *Greece* indeed had now succumbed to the might of Rome. But her own conqueror in arms she conquered in arts. She was the mistress of Rome and of the world in mental culture, in science, in letters. Under an overruling Providence she furnished to the Apostles the most copious and most beautiful of languages to express the divine truths of the Gospel. The Latin language, more stubborn and rugged and much less elastic, could not have adequately conveyed the subtle doctrines of St. John or St. Paul. But even Greece, as to her

literature, was now in her decadence. Her philosophy, her keenness of wit, her depth and breadth of thought, were not what they had been. All had now degenerated ; as the virtue of the ancient Romans, so the wisdom of the old Athenians.

As to the *religion*, properly so called, of these ancient heathens, both Greeks and Romans, they were (in the language of St. Paul) " without God and without hope in the world," i.e., they had no special revelation from Heaven ; they had no divine law, no written decalogue or code of moral precepts ; they had no inspired prophecies, no prospect at all of an approaching Deliverer, no hope whatever of a coming Messiah. Thus they were without God and without any hope in the world, i.e., not only without the privileges and the promises of the Jews, but on the outside of the Hebrew theocracy or divine government : they were in the world that lieth in the evil one : they were under the empire and dominion of Satan, and therefore their morals—what pen can portray their morals ?

A fearful picture and catalogue of their vices is given by St. Paul and by other writers of that period. Suffice it to say here, that they were sunk in a lethargy of luxury and of profligacy almost universal ; that licentiousness was the ruling passion and the reigning fashion ; that like galley-slaves they were tied to all manner of sin, until they were faint and weary of the exercise. Faint and weary ? Far more than that : as they were very wicked, so were they very wretched, for they were not without a conscience, and their conscience accused them night and day, it scourged their trembling souls with the whips of remorse, says Juvenal. They tried to banish the spectre of the guilty past, says Horace, by the dissipation of travel : they rushed from city to city, from province to province, not daring to turn round and face their former self, but striving to leave that behind them at home : but, says Horace again, what exile running

away from his country ever yet ran away from himself ? Let a bad man, a profligate, cross the wide sea, but he carries himself with him ; he may change his climate, but he cannot change his own heart.

And yet, brethren, all this widespread heathen darkness was now and then relieved, chequered by some soft stars. By whom ? By the Word not yet incarnate moving through the ages among the sons of men and scattering some rays of truth from the lantern of the Lord. Owing to this irradiance, there had been and still were amongst the Greeks and Romans such natural lights as Plato, Aristotle, Pindar, Aeschylus, Plutarch, Virgil, who exhibited in their writings glimpses of a soul constitutionally Christian, as Tertullian truly says. But these were, so far as we know, rare exceptions ; and it is quite certain that at the time of the First Advent the mass of mankind were such as I have described them : lovers of pleasure, slaves of vice, stung by remorse, a prey to anguish, prisoners of Satan without hope, helpless in the chain of their sins and conscious of their utter helplessness : while out of the depths of their moral dungeon a piteous heart-wail went up to Heaven continually, an agonizing cry for deliverance of some kind or other : until in the extremity of man's misery arrived the opportunity of God's mercy—having lingered long it arrived in due season—and at last, the fulness of the time being come, God sent forth out of Heaven His Son, born of a woman.

God sent forth His Son—in the fulness of time—when the world was very wicked. God gave His only begotten Son—in the fulness of time—when the world was very wretched. St. Paul calls it God's inestimable gift. Is it so to us ? Do we value it beyond compare, or are we indifferent to it ? God sent forth His Son in great humility to save us from our sins. Beware of despising so great salvation. Christianity is the salt of the earth : beware lest in you the salt lose its savour. The day of grace will soon pass away. God will again

send forth His Son, not in great humility but in power and great glory—for what purpose? To take vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel, but to be wondered at by all them that believe.

CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

THE MINISTRY OF SUFFERING

BY THE REVEREND ARTHUR WRIGHT, D.D.

ROMANS viii. 22.

“ The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

TO-DAY is the Feast of the Circumcision, at which we commemorate the first serious contact of the infant Jesus with human pain. For, being born of a Jewish Mother in a God-fearing house and having deliberately chosen to submit to the Law of Moses for our sake, He was in accordance with the requirements of that Law circumcised on the eighth day.

Christian children are no longer subject to that severe ordeal. For, though some of the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem strove hard for many years to rivet the yoke of Judaism upon us, St. Paul stood forth as our champion. Fierce raged the conflict. Conscientious men on both sides contended earnestly, as usual, for their own particular views. And it must be admitted that a strong case could be raised against St. Paul. For the Pharisees were entitled to plead that Circumcision was a divine institution, which had never been abolished. The Patriarchs from Abraham onwards, the Prophets, and the Psalmists had, one and all, been dedicated to God by this rite. Christ Himself had submitted to it, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. The Rabbis to a man had always insisted upon it. They might have made thousands of converts from amongst the

Gentiles, if only they had relaxed the rule. But they preferred fidelity to the Law of God, rather than popularity with men. Why should the Gentiles now claim a liberty which had been denied in all ages?

But St. Paul had clearer vision. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he foresaw that the future of Christendom depended upon making a stand on this question. The Gentiles, with rare exceptions, would never submit to be circumcised. The Pharisees, if they adhered to their rule, would continue to all time compassing sea and land to make one proselyte. And for what reason? Having begun in the Spirit, why should men seek to be made perfect in the flesh? Circumcision in itself profited nothing. "Christ," so far from leaving us an example, had "delivered us from the curse of the Law, when He was made a curse for us." When He submitted to be circumcised, He did so as our Representative, that we henceforth should be free. Though every pressure, therefore, was brought to bear upon the Apostle, he refused to give way. He fought the battle and won the victory. Time has proved that he was right.

But though religion has thus been purged of the taint of cruelty, Christians are by no means delivered from the necessity of submitting to pain. The martyr at the stake is a *voluntary* sufferer—which makes all the difference—but he suffers none the less. He feels bound to suffer for Christ's sake. Nature herself also imposes pain, and society inflicts it. A child cannot be born into the world without birth-pangs, and, as soon as he is born, the State requires that he should be vaccinated. His own welfare in the future and still more the welfare of his fellow-citizens is rightly held to demand that sacrifice.

We are all familiar with the *cry* of a child. It often rises to a shriek and there is always a cause for it. Pain of some kind is the commonest explanation. Again, the child does not pass his first year without the pain of teething. Before he is seven years old his teeth begin

to change—by a painful process. The older he grows, the more serious is the suffering which may beset him. Happy are they who have never undergone a surgical operation, never lost a limb or been laid aside by severe illness. Pain dogs our steps throughout life. And, even if we keep it at bay during our earthly pilgrimage, we succumb to it in our last hours.

Nor is this struggle confined to the *human* race. It is the one fact which most loudly proclaims our affinity with the beasts. "The whole creation," as St. Paul writes, "groans and travails in pain together until now."

Furthermore, the higher men rise in civilization, the more sensitive are they to pain. A brute does not feel pain with anything like the anguish which it causes to a man. A savage can stand without flinching what would prostrate one of us. The more refined classes suffer more acutely than the unlettered, so that those who reckon happiness by a material standard frequently protest against the cruelty of education, which undoubtedly only increases the capacity for sorrow.

When the Son of God entered into the world, He might (as you will allow) have claimed exemption from pain. Being free from sin, it would be natural for Him to escape it, for most of our pains come sooner or later from our own fault. But He deliberately chose to suffer. He was circumcised on the eighth day. He bore the extremity of hunger during the Temptation. He was agonized in Gethsemane. He underwent the most painful of all deaths upon the Cross.

Why did He do this, when human nature shrinks from it?

It was not, as the Docetists supposed, that He was callous and felt no pain. Nay, rather being perfect, He suffered (as we have seen) more acutely than we can. Listen to His own words: "Now is My Soul troubled: and what shall I say?—Father, save Me from this hour?" "My Soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

Plainly there was some reason for this suffering. The mystery of pain demands a more careful examination.

In the first place we must not exaggerate. It is indeed clear that it is God's Will that *death* should reign supreme over all living beings. For some reason, which we cannot stop to examine now, He has so decreed. But He has not decreed that we should live a life of pain. On the contrary pain is quite the exception, for though there are individuals whose existence is one long martyrdom, they are very few. The mass of mankind *enjoy* life; they only suffer occasionally; indeed, if we subtract those instances in which they suffer from their own fault, the occasions are rare. God evidently created us for happiness, and happiness in this world is a pledge to us of happiness in the world to come.

It is important to insist on this truth, lest we should be doing dishonour to God's goodness, and denying Him the love of a Father towards us.

For the same reason we may note that pain is a salutary thing. It is Nature's warning that something is wrong. If it were not for the pain, we should seldom know when we are ill. We should persist in deadly habits until our lives were cut short. But pain compels us to stop and reflect. It comes to us as a blessing in disguise.

Pain also improves our character by making us sympathetic. We are too prone to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But "One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin." We build hospitals to relieve sufferers. We study medicine to discover remedies. Few are so compassionate as those who have suffered.

The Epistle to the Hebrews does not hesitate to say the same thing of Christ. "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful High Priest in things pertaining unto God." "Having suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

Again, pain creates heroes. There is nothing more awful

than the pain inflicted on a modern battlefield. Gun-shot wounds, shells, shrapnel, bayonet-strokes and sword-cuts, are one worse than the other in causing excruciating torture. Surgeons who have gone through a campaign tell us, that, if only we could be present and see with our eyes the horrors of a great battle, we should demand the abolition of war, as of a barbarous and intolerable iniquity. But the soldier knows this and yet faces it without shrinking. In the late unexampled war it was difficult to determine which nation displayed the greatest hardihood. No hazard prevented them from volunteering for an expedition. The greater the risk, the more eagerness to face it. "It is sweet," said the old Latin poet, "and becoming to die for one's country." Long continued peace seemed to have made us forget that maxim, but war brought it to the front again. We may well rejoice at the glorification of our common humanity.

And in the humbler spheres of life there is need of heroism. We see it in athletic sports. We see it in *all* the struggles for success. That man is little valued who is always thinking of the danger, and always planning to avoid pain. Above all the Church of God is a great army doing battle against the world, the flesh and the devil. Men fall on all sides of us, but if dying they shout "Victory," there is no occasion for regret. We only want others to take their places. The crown of martyrdom is the chief glory.

It is no wonder therefore that Christ deliberately chose to suffer pain.

"For the pains which He endured,
Our salvation have procured."

Not only did He suffer for us, but He invites us to suffer with Him. We are, as St. Paul expresses it, to fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for His body which is the Church.

Such is the solidarity of the human race, that none

of us liveth to himself and no one dies unto himself. The pains, which we bear, are a relief to our neighbours. St. Paul writes as though the amount of sorrow to be endured by the Church were strictly limited ; if therefore one man bears more than his proper share, he leaves less for the others to bear. This thought may be poor consolation to those who are hopelessly selfish. But those who have learned from Christ to love the brethren, must feel no small consolation from it. " I could wish myself accursed from Christ," the Apostle declares, " for my brethren "—a thing impossible, of course, but the utterance of a great heart.

Let us then learn to glory in tribulations. Avoid pain, while you can, for it disqualifies for work ; but if in God's good providence it becomes our portion, let us welcome it for its sanctifying effect upon our lives. Let us pray that it may be hallowed to our friends and to our own souls.

The Apostles, when they were scourged by order of the Sanhedrin, returned to their own company, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. St. James bids us " count it all joy when ye fall into temptation, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience." St. Paul bids us to " glory in tribulations also, because tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit Which He hath given unto us."

Happy are we if we partake in the sufferings of Christ, for " if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

NEW YEAR'S DAY

NEW YEAR THOUGHTS

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND ERNEST HAROLD PEARCE, D.D.

ISAIAH xliii. 5-7.

"Fear not: for I am with thee," etc.

THERE is evident sign of Divine guidance in the arrangement which brings us face to face at the New Year season with the series of prophetic encouragements that emerges at the 40th chapter of this book. We open "Isaiah" at that point, and though God, speaking by His servant, says to us, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old," yet our instinct is to look backward. Hymns may say

"The year is gone, beyond recall,
With all its hopes and fears,
With all its bright and gladdening smiles,
With all its mourners' tears";

and John Henry Newman in his early times of trustfulness amid difficulty may pray that the "Kindly Light"—aptest of all titles for the Jesus of the Epiphany—would "remember not past years." But Newman, as his life has shown us, shared the common instinct for retrospection and almost hugged the inevitable bitterness of the backward look, explaining to himself again and again how his progress in the Church of his deliberate adoption had been stopped and his efforts thwarted. I know well that at the turn of the year there is danger in readiness of

speech, and in facile regret at what is done and cannot be undone :

“ For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.”

I know well the mistrust, the almost pity, with which we regard the loud protestations of the man who—always at this time—is in the act of turning over a new leaf, rustling it well that we may be sure that it *is* being turned, and fondly imagining that wisdom lies in never looking back to the earlier page again.

But, brethren, the truth is that our life, as God's providence guides it for us, and guides it without a slavish and fatalist control, is very like a composite book (with distinct breaks in it) such as this which we call “ Isaiah.” The span of years which stretches across this book is, indeed, far greater than the period within which our little individual life here below begins, continues, and then “ is rounded with a sleep.” But otherwise the conditions are not dissimilar. Many influences go to make our development what it is ; many prophets and teachers offer their contribution to its pages ; many changes of thought, many turns in the course of public, national and international policy, many modifications in the views of holy and high-minded men touching God's purposes for His servants and the means whereby He draws them unto Himself in secret prayer and outward adoration, many conflicting emotions which a modern writer has summed up in the phrase, “ Varieties of Religious Experience ” ; these and other such cast across the resulting pages their puzzling shadows or their bright beams of guiding light. Every thoughtful career, as it looks back, knows that it is compact, as the first part of “ Isaiah ” is compact of “ woes and “ burdens ” and visions at critical moments. There are few of us to whom it has not

been granted to be able to say the equivalent of, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord," had unwonted glimpses into the perfect splendour of the Thrice-Holy and into His personal and direct demand for my definite service at moments of near and poignant disaster. There are few again to whom the events that are printed large in the Foreign-Intelligence columns of the newspapers have meant merely so much interesting and exciting news and have never at any time had the character of the "burdens" "which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see"—the burdens of Babylon and Moab and Damascus and Egypt and "the wilderness of the Sea" and "the valley of vision" and Arabia and Tyre; at some time to the least sentimental of us the happenings of the world lose their quality of mere happenings and appear as the manifest providences that they surely are. At such times we get to understand what the Prophet meant by his quaint idea that the Lord of life is keener for the latest news of the day than we are ourselves; that He has sent out His orders to "go, set a watchman, let him declare," and the watchman does declare, not to us first but to the Lord: "O Lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and am set in my ward whole nights: and, behold, here cometh a troop of men, horsemen in pairs." It means that "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," and that one more stage in the Divine plan is accomplished, one more bulwark against Assyria is destroyed.

But what we are thus willing to admit about great cosmic crises and about events that shake the calm control of ordinary unimpressionable mankind must have its daily analogy in God's dealings with you and me; and the prospect of another year would needs be dark and dismal unless I am certain that even in my seemingly unimportant life "nothing walks with aimless feet" now as in the past. That is the reason why the volume of the book that is written of me is just as miscellaneous as Isaiah's prophecies, when someone has pieced them all

together and written them at length down continuous columns. There is the "burden," the God-written record of some crushing sorrow, when the very light of mine eyes was taken at a stroke; there is the "burden" of some sudden failure of power for work, some definite foreclosing of continuance in my calling; there is the "burden," often scarcely less heavy, of some triumphant success, some blazingly sunny prosperity, of which the effects were too much for a heart which had asked "long life" and "riches" and "the life of [its] enemies," but had forgotten to ask for itself "understanding to discern judgment"; there is the "burden" of some hideous sin, resisted indeed, yet so that the very success of the resistance involves me in the snare of pride, itself hardly less insidious than the original temptation. They are all "burdens" in Isaiah's sense of the word, utterances, that is to say, which speak to me of the Father's care, Who watches the life of the sparrow and the sheep and the lilies of the field, and condescends to regard mine as of much more value than theirs.

Now the break in Isaiah's book occurs at just such a point of providential care for an individual life. I do not think I need spend time in convincing you that there is a break, so marked that clearly Isaiah the son of Amoz has finished the work which God gave him to do, and that another has now received his bishopric; indeed, it is possible that yet others took up the tale before the book was complete. For Isaiah the son of Amoz, the captivity lay ahead as God's remedy for the moral and religious rottenness of the people. For the Prophet of the second part of the book, the Exile lay almost behind or the Return just ahead as God's preparation of the people for service on His behalf to mankind. Assyria is the bugbear of the one, Babylon hears its fate from the other. The first Isaiah sees Israel as "a nation on their own soil," with civic responsibilities to which they are faithless, with a foreign policy that reveals their cowardice,

with an assiduous life-service to a God Whom their shameless practice constantly denied. The Prophet of the Return sees Israel as a captive nation on a foreign soil, "with no civic life and few social responsibilities, with occasion for the exercise of almost no qualities save those of penitence and faith, of memory and hope."

And there are differences of style, of imagery, of exhortation, to correspond with this divergence of aspect. If I were to stay to press the fact on your attention at all, it would be in order to urge upon you that such a break has its counterpart in the dealings of our Heavenly Father with many individuals among His servants. There will surely be some here for whom the opening of a new diary means that the time is drawing nigh when it will not be possible to make many engagements, and whose chief hope is that very soon they may see "the King in His beauty." If so, I pray you, tell *us* who are younger, is it not your experience that the Father has changed the tone of His Self-revelation to you, as need required? Can you not put the finger of memory upon turns in your life when the contents of His message to your soul seemed to be altered with no greater suddenness than that which marks the break in Isaiah? Can you not say, after the fashion of the Psalmist: "I have been young and now am old; yet always at the Father's hand I had the bread that I needed for the day that lay before me: as my day, so was my strength from Him: but the days changed their aspect; and the bread and the strength changed according to my need"?

And so I am led to ask, what is the meaning for us, what is the help for us on this first Sunday of another year, in this break in the great book of Evangelical Prophecy? Look before the break and after it, and you will get the answer. Before it we stand with Isaiah in the sickroom of a king, watching the empirical remedies that went along with the Lord's decree that he should recover from his sickness, hearing his poetic delight in a

restoration to life and witnessing his almost selfish exultation that at least in his days "there shall be peace and truth." Hezekiah is a brand plucked from the burning. It seems as we read the story of his times that this is a case of "among the faithless faithful only he." The very form of religion at which he laboured under Isaiah's influence failed of completeness because it was engineered from above and had no real response down among the hearts and consciences of the people. There is much in the king that we like to recall with thankfulness—his road-making, his care for a good water-supply, his encouragement of literature, his fostering interest in Church music. But there he is, at the close of Isaiah's ministry, the one more or less respectable product of the Prophet's anxious obedience to the call that came to him from before Jehovah's awful Throne in the year that King Uzziah died—a king without a people to respond to the Godward movements of his heart, a king who will die, indeed, in peace and truth, a king who knows, truly, that God has cast all his sins behind His back, but who hears with an almost complacent resignation Isaiah's last assurance that after him will come the deluge.

And then look to the other side of the break. The need now is not to lash with the whip of vivid description the social and personal sins of a doomed community, nor to light up the darkness of their spiritual indifference with the glimmering rushlight of Hezekiah's goodness. What is wanted now is to convince a people, which is purged of its glaring evils and has received double for all its sins, that it is in the hands of a God Whose aims are worldwide and Whose arm is not shortened, and that He can and will prepare their way through the wilderness back to the desolate places of Zion. But because He is strong and because His purposes are without limit, there is a call for their confidence in His strength and for their response to nothing lower than His purposes. It may be that still they will fail: for who is blind but His servant? It may be

that in the last resort help must be laid on specially chosen individuals before the eyes of the blind shall be opened. To-day let it be enough for us to encourage ourselves with the thought of His full plan. In the past we have brought to Him an individual here and there, some oppressed and broken Hezekiah, chattering "like a swallow or a crane," mourning "as a dove." But God's call is to an entire nation and to all nations in their entirety. Do you say, It is too much, or, What am I among so many? Then He deals with you as He dealt with those exiles, saying, "Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather them from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back." And it won't end with you: for, if you are faithful in service, it will include everyone called by His name, everyone created for His glory.

EPIPHANY

THE FEAST OF LIGHT

BY THE REVEREND HUGH FRASER STEWART, D.D.

ST. MATTHEW v. 16.

“ Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven.”

TO-DAY the Holy Catholic Church throughout all the world keeps a Feast of Light. The name Epiphany, i.e., “Manifestation,” proclaims it, proclaims the glad tidings that the Sun of Righteousness, the Day Star from on high, has risen upon us, has visited this sin-darkened world ; and proclaims it with a wealth and variety of allusion which we hardly realize. For our Prayer Book, by the title which it gives to the Festival, seems to restrict the Manifestation which we are bidden celebrate to the Manifestation of Christ to Gentiles, represented in the persons of the wise men from the East. It was not always so restricted ; it is not everywhere so restricted in the Church of Christ ; it is not really so restricted by ourselves. For several hundred years the Eastern branches of the Church—in Egypt, at Jerusalem, Antioch, and Cyprus—included in their commemoration on this day, among other manifestations of Christ, that first and most signal of them all—His manifestation to the world, i.e., His Birth as Man. Gradually a special day was adopted for this purpose, and the Nativity began to be commemorated

apart, on the day we all know so well—the 25th of the last month of the year. But even after the Nativity had come to be kept apart, this, the twelfth day from its occurrence, was fraught in many places with other memories and suggestions than those with which we are accustomed to associate it. And upon investigation we find that our Prayer Book is wider and more comprehensive than its own definition. For it points in both the Second Lessons to instances of the Manifestation of God's glory in Christ Jesus, which, but for the hint so given, or but for familiarity with ancient custom, we should be quite likely to overlook on this day. This Day of Lights, the Epiphany, was intended to recall to faithful souls at least four manifestations of the Light in which they are summoned to walk, over and above the manifestation which precedes them all and which they all presuppose—the Birth of Christ at Christmas.

First, there is the light of the Holy Spirit, shed not only upon us but also upon our Lord and Master at His Baptism. "Illumination" is an ancient name, one of the most ancient names for that Sacrament whereby the believer is initiated into the mystery hidden from the foundations of the world, but now at length revealed, whereby he is introduced into that clear and perfect knowledge of God wherein consisteth our eternal life ; and to Jesus Christ Himself, the God-Man, this Sacrament which He gave us the example of undertaking, as He gave us the commandment to continue it, was a real Sacrament, a real means of grace, a real communication of the Holy Spirit : " And Jesus also being baptized and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon Him." And immediately thereafter we are told that " Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The Holy Spirit then came upon Him and abode with Him, enlightening Him, we may believe, during His long solitary sojourn in the desert as to the full meaning of

that mission which He had vouchsafed to discharge on our behalf ; the Holy Spirit enabled Him, so long as He was on the earth, to know and perfectly fulfil and work the Father's Will. The Holy Spirit, by Whose operation He was man, empowered Him to live His perfect life as man, to offer up as man the sacrifice which God's unalterable justice demanded of man, but which, unaided, poor pitiable man could never hope to offer ; empowered Him, in a word, to realize and set His seal upon the words of blessing called over Him at His baptism : " This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

His baptism was therefore in the strictest sense an illumination for Him, as ours is for us, and it was right and it is right that men should commemorate it on this day. And the Second Lesson this morning bade us so commemorate it.

Again, there is that Manifestation of His glory, the glory as of the only begotten sent by God the Father, which burst upon the Apostles' wondering eyes at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, when, taking His share in the highest festival of natural love, blessing it by His presence and approval, *He* supplied the wine of gladness, the type of warm affection and emotion, and by His gift of water turned to wine foretold the purification and ennoblement of all human joys and human love in His own heavenly person. " This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him." It was right and it is right that men should bear in mind that scene, that like the beloved Apostle we should mark the phases of the Manifestation of the only begotten Son of God, and with the Church of old should commemorate it on this day. The Second Lesson for this evening bids us so observe and bear in mind.

Thirdly, there was His manifestation as the Messiah, the anointed Saviour of the World, " that appearing (Epiphany) of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath

abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light by His Gospel," the appearing which made manifest "the purpose and the grace of God, given unto us in Him before the world began, and now at length disclosed at His Incarnation," the appearing of "the Grace of God that brings salvation unto all men."

It was right and it is right, meet right and our bounden duty that we should at all times lift up grateful hearts to God for His inestimable love in His redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is right that we should follow ancient precept and thank Him for His great gift this day.

Lastly, there was the special Manifestation to the Gentiles which is brought before us by the Prayer Book description, by the Collect, and the Gospel for the day, when He that was born, not only under law but under the Law, the Mosaic legislation, born of the seed of Abraham, a member of the chosen race, was declared to be King, not of the Jews alone but of the whole wide earth, and was sought for and found by Eastern sages, who by their unknown origin and unexpectedness were fitting representatives of us Gentiles, to whom in these latter days God in His unspeakable mercy has given Light.

Light, then, is the message of Epiphany, the light in which we see life; light, illuminating, warming, enkindling; light shed on us and transmitted by us to the whole world that yet lies in darkness and the shadow of death.

I do not propose to discuss in detail the particular manifestation of the light of which we have read in the Gospel and for which we give thanks in the Epiphany Collect. Human surmise and speculation and calculation and tradition have been busy with the star and with the wise men from the East for many hundred years. All that we need to know about the star is simply this—it was the means whereby Christ was found. All that we need to believe about the Magi is simply this—that in the far East their

hearts had been prepared by God to look for and to recognize the sign, the means whereby they should know the King of the Jews, their King that was to be. Enough that, when the Son of God came into the world, the Father called them from their distant home and lit a lamp to guide their feet to where the young Child lay. They come, they see, they give their gifts, they worship and return, and the star goes out. It was *only* a means ; but it was God-given and therefore a cause of rejoicing to them and to us.

God lit a lamp of old to guide men to His Son, Who in His turn should guide them to Himself. And God lights a lamp now. The Church, founded by His Son and witnessing to Him, bound to Him by ties so close that the closest and most intimate of human relations—that of man and woman bound by holy matrimony—can furnish but a dim figure of the union—that is, that should be, the light in the world to-day, pointing and directing men to God. But, alas, the very name “ Church ” falls on many hearts with a sort of chill, on many hearts that truly love the Church’s Head, the Church’s Bridegroom. Spiritual men there are, who will talk readily with you of God, of Christ, of their own souls’ experiences, who yet, the moment the name “ Church ” is breathed, are dumb, or turn impatiently away. “ Give us more of Christ,” they say, “ and less of the Church.”

And it is a cry which all Christians, all Churchmen, and, above all, all ministers of the Church should lay most seriously to heart. For what is it, and who are they that have caused, yes, and are causing daily the fair name of “ Church ” to be a byword, causing good men to dissociate the thought of Church from that of Christ ? It is you and I, we unworthy Churchmen, it is above all we the unworthy priests of the Church, the hands and instruments for carrying out the intention of the whole body, who by our unworthy secular aims and petty, selfish, idle lives are to blame ; and if there are any here who think light of the Church, let them believe that though the

exponents of the system are often false, the system itself and the idea are true. To all who look out upon life in the light of experience it must surely be clear that, while a non-sacramental Christianity may save individual souls and produce precious examples of a holy life, the Church, the visible expression of a sacramental religion, is the appointed instrument for the regeneration of the world, that it is in fact the star, the lamp, the light by which God wills that men should be brought to Him through Christ.

This being so, and surely no one here will seriously dispute it, we must ask ourselves, What share do we take in, what contribution do we make towards, the volume of light which the Church is giving forth? The whole volume of light is composed of countless individual lights—just as the glare of a town or city in the night sky resolves itself as we draw near into many single lights. No tiny candle but contributes to the general effect. No single humble Christian but helps to swell the splendour of the light of the world.

But, alas, our light, the light of our own lives, is often dim and flickering, cold and coloured, very different from the white, steady radiance which God demands. It is so difficult to maintain it clear and true and warm and pure. There are difficulties from without and from within, difficulties of circumstance and difficulties of character and temper. And the circumstances, at least, we plead we cannot help. How can the light of Christian life burn bright and high in the exhausted fevered air of anxious business, in the unwholesome, unnatural air of loneliness and isolation? Where can we find time, amid the stress of family cares that absorb us, to trim our lamps? How can we who are solitary and unbefriended have the heart to tend our tiny, easily-forgotten flame? In the one case the answer is plain, but it may sound harsh and unsympathetic. The cares *ought not to absorb* you. He for Whom you should shine has a first claim on your

love and anxiety and eager energy. Hear what He says : " Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God." " He that loveth "—any human soul or any earthly business—" more than Me is not worthy of Me." Hear and reflect.

In the other case the answer is equally plain and easy to pronounce, but still more difficult to realize and act upon. You are *not* friendless nor alone. Christ has called you to be His friend if you do those things which He has commanded you, and one plain command is this, " Let your light shine before men."

And then there are the difficulties of character and temper. These are at least within our own control, however far beyond our control we like to place the difficulties of our surroundings. The hasty, passionate temper, quick to take offence, ready to blaze out in a red fury or in angry spots of irritation—that stains your light. The sullen morose temper or the fits of deep depression and gloom which you may think are signs of a serious character but which are the bane of all with whom you come in contact—those dim your light. The cold and selfish habit which has no thought for others, but tells a man to look to his own comfort and well-being and let the world look to itself—that quenches your light.

And supposing you cannot plead guilty to any one of these faults or others like them, supposing you are, and are acknowledged to be, calm and equable, and unselfish and cheerful and a help to those about you and in favour with your fellows, why then you may be furthest off of all from fulfilling the command of my text ; for you may be shining for yourself and pointing to yourself, calling men to admire and to imitate yourself ; whereas you are bidden so to shine that men may glorify not you but your Father Who is in Heaven. Ah, it *is* difficult to be a Christian ; it would be impossible to follow those commands to shine for God, and to be perfect like to God, were it not that He Who gives the command gives the power to obey

it. May He, in His mercy, fill our little lamps with the oil of His Holy Spirit, that they may shine bright before men, that they may swell the splendour and brightness of His Church, and light the path to Heaven and to Him.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE FIRST RECORDED UTTERANCE OF CHRIST

BY THE REVEREND FREDERICK ARTHUR CLARKE, M.A.

ST. LUKE ii. 49.

“ How is it that ye sought Me ? Wist ye not that I must be in My Father’s house ? ”

“ THE child is father of the man ” ; and there is deep interest in discovering (as we sometimes may) in the early life of some great hero or sage a hint or unconscious prophecy of his coming greatness. Some chance word, some little characteristic incident, is treasured up as a kind of omen or augury of what was to come. We read, for instance, with a sort of awe, the story of the boy Hannibal, devoted—as to the sacred duty of his life—to war against Rome. And we have a far deeper feeling about the incident of our Lord’s boyhood recorded in the Gospel—the only narrative which breaks the long silence between the infancy and the opening of the public ministry.

And perhaps this feeling rests to a great extent on the words uttered by the Divine Child, words that seem so significant, so prophetic in the form with which we are most familiar—“ Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business ? ”—expressing so truly the whole meaning and spirit of that Divine life which is the light of men.

These are the first to be recorded of all those words of the Lord Jesus, which are surely the most precious part

of Revelation. And it may seem strange—it is disappointing, almost disturbing—that there should be a difference of opinion as to their meaning. But it is so. The Greek is not so much ambiguous as vague and comprehensive; no English rendering can be quite so vague. The margin of the Revised Version gives the Greek as “in the things of My Father,” but even here the word “things” is supplied. “In (or among) My Father’s” would be rather more literal—“Father’s” being the possessive singular. “At My Father’s” would be understood colloquially by us as meaning “at My Father’s house.”

The early Greek commentators who spoke every day the language in which the New Testament is written, understood the expression in this way, and that is probably—almost certainly—its meaning: “In My Father’s house,” though one cannot feel quite sure that its vagueness was not understood by the Evangelist to leave room for some further, deeper meaning.

Does all this seem trifling? Is it a mere matter of words? I think not. I don’t mean that it is of the highest importance, for of course the whole incident might have been lost without taking away anything fundamental from our knowledge of Jesus Christ. But there can hardly be a case in which a slight difference of rendering affects so seriously the whole tone and meaning of the incident itself. Let us look, then, at the narrative.

The Child—or rather, the Boy Jesus was twelve years old, and by the end of his twelfth year the Jewish boy became “a son of the Law,” of the Torah or Commands. It was a turning-point in his life like that which among us is marked by Confirmation, the point at which the child is no longer an infant, a mere member of a family, but becomes a member of the Church, the people of God, with an individual responsibility, no longer completely overshadowed by his father’s authority, regarded now as directly and individually bound by the Law of God.

At this age, then, or perhaps before this age was fully reached—the Holy Child made what was evidently His first visit since infancy to Jerusalem at the time of the Paschal feast. For any Jewish child this must have been a wonderful occasion, for the whole system of the Jewish religion centred in Jerusalem and the Temple in a way which has no parallel at all in our religious life. But to *Him*—with His perfect purity and devotion, the sincerity, clearness, depth of His whole spiritual nature—it must have been a marvellous time. Everything He saw and heard in the divinely appointed worship and ritual would be so full of meaning, of light and power. On our part, the wonderful expressions of our services sink such a little way into our hearts and minds. I sometimes think that if we could once, deeply and fully, with heart and intelligence and will enter into the meaning of a single one of our services at church—at all events, a single Eucharist—then the whole of life would be changed for us. All things would become new; this earth would be for us thenceforth one of the many mansions of the Father's house. The services of the Temple were indeed but shadows of the realities which are ours; yet they would be full of significance and splendour and heavenly grace to the true Child of God, perfect in purity and truth and love.

It may have been His delighted absorption in the Temple worship that led to the accident of His being left behind when the company of pilgrims started homewards. Though the feast lasted eight days, it seems that attendance on the first two days was all that was generally required, and that many worshippers left after that. It may have been so here. The instruction in the Courts of the Temple by doctors and teachers of the Law was a special feature of the Feasts while a multitude of visitors was still in Jerusalem. It was in a group gathered for this purpose that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph found the Holy Child after their anxious search. He was

sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.

We need not think of Him, with some, as putting Himself forward as a teacher, while His elders listened with awe. In such gatherings or classes all were allowed to join in discussion, to make comments or put questions; there would be nothing unusual even in a child doing so. A child may ask questions which the wisest cannot answer. And this Holy Child, with His perfect innocence, His deep and pure spirituality, may well have made some remark which struck to the hearts of all, and drew the wisest round Him, eager to see and converse with One Who had said such things. Then came the Mother with her question, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

"How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" We all feel the beauty and wonder of His words in that rendering. They do set a stamp upon that blessed Life, the Life of Him Who came to do the Father's Will, Whose meat it was to do the Will of Him that sent Him.

Yet, if this is the meaning, what is the *point* of the question, and the point of the question before it, "How is it that ye sought Me?" It *can* only be a rebuke to them for *seeking* Him. It can only mean that they ought not to have sought Him, that they ought to have gone on their way, and left Him to Himself, sure that He was obeying a higher authority, following a higher guidance than theirs. It is the assertion of His independence, a claim to take a line of His own, apart from their control, looking only to God for direction. "Wherever I may be, I am about My Father's business: *that* is the occupation of My life; and, knowing that, when you missed Me you should not have turned back to seek Me: you should have continued your journey home, without anxiety or concern about Me."

It is hard, I think, to believe that this was His meaning, or that He Who still, for eighteen years, was subject to His

earthly parents, could so early have anticipated the stern words of the opening ministry, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

On the other hand, the alternative rendering, "In My Father's house," may suggest a simply human and natural view of the incident. From infancy the Holy Child had heard with love and awe of the Temple at Jerusalem, in which He had been presented as a Babe, as His Father's house. At last His eager longings are fulfilled; He treads the Sacred Courts: He is filled with interest, wonder, joy at all He sees and hears. And when His Mother, finding Him still there, speaks words of reproach and tells Him she has sought Him sorrowing, He replies, "How is it that ye sought Me? How could you be at a loss, or doubt where you would find Me? Where should I be but here in My Father's house, here in My true home?"

The words, it might be said, might have been spoken by any devout, simple-hearted child. Indeed I think they would be more natural if spoken by a child much less than twelve years old. And it may be questioned whether St. Luke would have thought it worth while to preserve this story, touching and beautiful as it is, if this were its meaning. I feel myself two difficulties about the explanation I have just given. First, St. Luke says, "They understood not the saying which He spake unto them," though on this theory it would seem intelligible enough. Secondly, it is more than doubtful whether an ordinary Jewish child would be taught to speak and think of God as his Father.

There is nothing like it in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, according to Bishop Westcott, "the title 'Son' was given to Israel as the chosen nation, but to no single Jew," except in two passages in the Psalms, where it is used of David's son or descendant, as a type of that greater Son of David the Anointed One to Whom Psalmists and Prophets looked forward.

It seems to me probable that what St. Luke wants to insist upon, what gave the incident its value in his view, was the Child's employment of the words "My Father." The words are certainly emphatic. "Thy father and I," says the Blessed Mother. And in His reply the Child speaks of the Temple as "My Father's house." Christ's first recorded words reveal that consciousness of being God's Son which is the central foundation fact of His whole life.

How He gained that consciousness, we need hardly ask. His Mother may have told Him of the Angel's message that that which should be born of her should be called Holy, the Son of God. Or He may have been led on to it by direct inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. The Psalmist's words, "O God, Thou art *my* God," mark a great step forward in religious thought, when the God of the race, of the world, is felt to be the God of the separate, individual, soul. And a similar step may have been taken in the Holy Child's secret consciousness, "O Father, Thou art My Father."

The event with which the Epiphany was specially associated in the earliest times was—it seems—not the visit of the Magi, but the Baptism of our Lord, His manifestation to the Baptist in Jordan's stream as God in Man.

And the Baptism is the very next event about Our Lord which St. Luke records after the finding in the Temple. The first recorded words of the Holy Child in the Temple claim God as His Father: and then the Gospel story keeps silence about Him for eighteen years till at His Baptism, as He stood praying, there came from the opened Heaven the answering voice, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE BLESSEDNESS OF WORK

BY THE VERY REVEREND GEORGE T. S. FARQUHAR, D.D.

ST. JOHN ii. 7.

“Jesus saith unto them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim.”

THE Author of our nature has endowed us with certain capacities. One thing certainly follows from this, viz., that He did not do so in order that we might make no use of them, leaving them unproductive, but in order that we might exercise them and cause them to be fruitful. The very constitution of our being therefore shows that we are intended for work and not for sloth.

And the work thus expected of us is not merely of one kind but of many. For the very circumstance that we have various different capacities shows that various different kinds of work lie before us. Each man, of course, cannot become proficient in every direction, but different men will devote themselves to different activities. Some, for instance, will work with their hands, and of these there will be innumerable different sorts; others will work chiefly with their minds, of whom also there will be an immense variety of classes. And some will exercise the abounding energies of the soul. Whether, however, it be by bodily, mental, or spiritual effort, all are intended to work somehow.

It is important, however, to realize that all kinds of

activity do not constitute work. There are limitations here. Certainly amusement in its own proper place may be rightly called work. God would not have given us the capacity of relaxation, if He had not meant us to use it and if there had not been some good purpose to be gained by it. And so, of course, we are intended to amuse ourselves, in order to retain our health and elasticity both of mind and body. But to pursue after it beyond this degree; to make it our chief end; to turn life into a direct and unending chase after diversion for its own sake—this may involve an immense deal of activity, but it does not legitimately fall under the category of work: in fact, it is a mere parody of work: it is a thing which cannot profit, because it is vain. We have to notice, accordingly, that we are not intended to be busy about trifles, but only about that in which real profit of some kind resides.

“ Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day! ”

Let us notice the bad and the good, which respectively follow from real idleness and real work. Take the case of a person, who is lazy and shirks work, or at least is active only in vanities, and what harm does he do? First, he does negative harm: a great deal of good, alas! is left undone, which ought to have been done. If he be an intellectual man, some eminent work of imagination or research is withheld from the world. Witness the case of Coleridge, who, having been born a poet of absolutely the first rank, as his “ Ancient Mariner ” proves, has yet, through sloth, left us only a very small volume of verse. And, if the idler be a manual worker, a great amount of profitable material, which ought to have been secured and utilized for the good of society has been left, as if it did not exist. But the negative harm, the blank

loss, is by no means all. The sluggard has done positive harm. He has injured his neighbour by throwing on him more than his due share of toil, i.e., the effort, which he ought not to have been called upon to face, of fighting the influence of bad example. Again, he has injured his own character, for the moral level of a loafer is always on the down grade :

“ For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do ! ”

And, lastly, he has injured God, for God had an ideal to the carrying out of which He intended this individual to contribute, and he has not contributed to it but left it a mournful fragment for God to contemplate.

On the other hand, however, the worker accomplishes just the contrary. If the talent committed to him has been that of Imagination, he has given to the world not merely a slender booklet of poems, as was the case with Coleridge, but a perfect “ feast of fat things on the lees, well refined.” Thus, for example, in the opinion of Matthew Arnold, one of our greatest critics, Coleridge’s unweariedly industrious friend, Wordsworth, left behind him the largest body of poetry of the highest order which anyone has bequeathed to posterity since Milton. If the talent committed to the worker has been a field to cultivate by manual labour, he can, at the end of his life, look at that field and reflect that by his exertions in it he has been the means of keeping those dependent on him in health and at least some degree of comfort, and has also been an inspiration to them by his energetic example. And, if the talent committed to him has been of a spiritual kind, then, too, he has effected much to the glory of God, the good of his fellow-men and the benefit of his own soul.

So far we have been trying to describe the worker and the idler in merely general terms. Since, however, actual examples always dwell in the mind more vividly, let us now bring forward from Holy Scripture certain individual

examples, both of the one and of the other. Well, of the idler we learn that the author of the Book of Proverbs had seen not a few instances, for he says : " How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard ? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep, a little more slumber and a little more folding of the hands to sleep ! " Can you not see the picture ? Is it not a photograph from life—the life of nearly 3,000 years ago ? Then, turning to the New Testament, we have the man who received the one talent in the Parable. While his two friends were joyously trying to double what had been given to them, he hid his in a hole in the earth and let it lie there, to the grief, no doubt, of his active companions and the righteous indignation of his Master when he returned. Then there is Dives in another parable. Either he was a sluggard and had everything done for him, or else he was a person busy only about trifles ; so busy about the exact cut of his purple and fine linen and the menus of his daily sumptuous fare, that he had absolutely no time to attend to Lazarus, lying helpless and miserable at his gate !

And of the workers, where shall we find examples ? They abound in the pages of Holy Scripture. Think, for example, of St. Paul—what a strenuous toiler he was ! Without attempting to bring forward a wealth of incidents from his life, which we easily could, let us be content with recalling just this one exclamation of his : " Are they ministers of Christ ? I speak as a fool, I am more ; in labours more abundant ! " There is also another example of conscientious and zealous workers, of which I am particularly fond. They were persons in a very humble position in life, of whom, individually, we know next to nothing. But then the mention made, such as it is, lets in a flash of light upon them, which is delightful, revealing them as persons who had fully grasped the true privilege, nobility and joy of work. They are, I mean, the persons mentioned in our text. Jesus was sitting at the marriage feast of Cana and His Mother told

Him that their host's stock of wine was exhausted. Taking no notice at first but waiting His time, He at last said to the servants, "Fill the water-pots with water!" And what was the response? A lazy, grudging obedience significant of a real hatred of work? A reply that they were not paid to take their instructions from a guest? An attempt to strike a bargain with Our Lord—they would fill the water-pots on the promise of such and such an increase to their wages; if not, not? No such self-seeking! No, it was their pride and ambition to make the marriage feast pass off successfully! They loved their work. It was its own reward! They had caught the true spirit of generosity, and off they ran without any hesitation and did enthusiastically what the Lord had bid them do. "Jesus said unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." How cheered at heart must Jesus have been to see such zealous workers!

Whatever, then, may be thought in certain circles, let us, brethren, go home this morning with the following resolves: First, to realize that it is contrary to the constitution of our nature to shirk work. Let those who seem to be lifted by their circumstances above the necessity of earning each day their daily bread, refuse to settle down to the idea that they are therefore at liberty either to lead idle, empty lives, or to devote their years to the pursuit of trifles. Recreation? Yes, so far as it accomplishes the good end of supplying needful refreshment to mind and body; but let them not waste their precious time in putting amusement upon the throne, which ought to be occupied by God.

And as for those who are not lifted up by circumstances above the need of earning each day their daily bread, let them be careful not to fall into the same error under a somewhat different form. Let them not long to be like, and envy, those who, as we have seen, finding themselves already wealthy, make their position an excuse

for self-indulgent idleness, and amusement the lodestar of their lives. Let them never suppose that work is a grievance thrust upon them, or undertake it merely as the only means at their disposal for securing as much self-indulgence and folly as possible.

No, but let both classes realize that work, that is, labour for the glory of God, the good of their neighbour and the supply of their own legitimate needs is the design demonstrated by the very constitution of their nature; that consequently it is so far from degrading a person that it dignifies him; and, therefore, having realized the true nature of work, let them suspect that there is something wrong with themselves, if they do not welcome work as a blessing. As for happiness, let them learn by experience that it does not come by being directly hunted after, but as a by-product of healthy labour. Let them thus prove how true those words of our Lord are: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Let them imitate those servants at Cana of Galilee who rejoiced in receiving a task from their Lord. Let us all, in fact, both rich and poor be such that, if Christ came to us and said, "Fill the waterpots with water," we should eagerly run off at once and "fill them up to the brim."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FAITH, INSIGHT, AND OUTLOOK

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND HERBERT LOUIS WILD, D.D.

ST. MATTHEW viii. 10.

“ Verily I say unto you, with no man in Israel have I found so great faith.”

THE words form part of the story of the centurion who besought Our Lord to heal his servant. In his humility, his care for his servant, his simplicity and directness, the centurion comes before us as a specially attractive figure. He was a Gentile, and as such did not venture to bring his servant to the famous Jewish Teacher. When Our Lord proposed coming to his house, he professed his unworthiness and begged Him to heal the servant at a distance by a word. “ Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof : but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man under authority having under myself soldiers : and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” He means that there could be no question of Jesus’ power : just as he himself belonged to the ordered and disciplined body of the Roman army, so Our Lord was at the head of a great spiritual host, having spiritual agents at His command, who would carry out His word for the healing of the palsied servant. In other words :

“ Thousands at His bidding speed
And post o’er land and ocean without rest.”

Let Him send one of these heavenly agents to do His bidding. And thereupon follows the commendation of the text and the subsequent emphatic pronouncement : " Verily I say unto you, with no man in Israel have I found so great faith. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven."

This faith, which wins so high a commendation—what is it? Certainly it is not blind credulity nor anything akin to it. Rather is it a form of insight—the power to recognize what is implied beyond what actually meets the eye, combined with trust in such insight. It is the faculty of seeing deeply and truly into things and persons :

" To see the world in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower ;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour."

If one may take other kindred instances—" A primrose by a river's brim," " a flower in a crannied wall "—these for the ear of faith have their message, it may be, of varying clearness. Faith may not fully have apprehended it, but it realizes that the message is there to apprehend :

" Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

Similarly it was an achievement of faith to see in the homeless human figure in the streets of Capernaum the Lord of heavenly hosts, and to call upon Him as such to do this act of healing. " Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." It showed wonderful insight and trust, and as such it was recognized by Our Lord. " When Jesus heard it, He marvelled."

As our second point for consideration let us take these words. They are of great importance. On a simple reading of the story it would seem as if this recognition of His being by one who was outside the Jewish circle came to Our Lord as a surprise, and led to a change of outlook. There is evidence that He had begun His ministry as a mission to the chosen people. Whatever might follow presently, they were to be won first: but His purpose and outlook would seem to have been enlarged by strangers from outside who, as it were, took the Kingdom by force: such were the centurion of this story, the Syrophœnician woman pleading for her daughter, the grateful Samaritan. The power of insight and faith of these people break down the confining barriers, and the experience of interviews with them is summed up in sayings like that about the other sheep who are not of this fold: "Them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd."

This thought became part of the heritage of the Church and the way was opened for the revelation to St. Paul of that "hidden mystery" that the "Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body" with the Jews. At first sight this thought of a development of view in Our Lord on so important a subject seems startling, but it does not stand alone. Not at once, as it would seem, did Our Lord recognize that the path of the Messiah was the path of suffering. In the vehemence with which Peter's suggestion at Cæsarea Philippi is thrust aside we may see that there had been an inclination—dare we say temptation?—to seek some other way. Not at once, similarly, was it recognized that the Kingdom was to transcend all old national barriers. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" is the charge to the disciples on their mission: "it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs," are the startling words to the Phœnician woman. Only on the theory of some development of view can we naturally reconcile such sayings

with the generous universalism of this passage in the true spirit of the Epiphany : " I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven." These strangers, you will observe, do not remain in the outer courts ; they are admitted to the banquet with the most privileged and honoured guests. Already we have the spirit of the great saying : " In Christ Jesus there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, free-man ; but Christ is all and in all."

It would seem to have been part of the Divine self-emptying that there should be this progress, this gradual coming to its own of the human mind of Our Blessed Lord, this growth in apprehension of His mission and the process of its fulfilment. " We conceive," says Bishop Gore, " that in order to set the example of a true human life in its relation both towards God and towards man, the Eternal Son passed through all stages of a human development, willing with a human will, perceiving with human perceptions, feeling with human feelings, receiving and depending upon the illuminating unction of the Holy Ghost, and thus fathoming to their depths the experiences which can come upon man in accordance with God's will." We realize at any rate to-day that no a priori theory of Our Lord's mind and consciousness will serve us. If we would know the living Christ and His power we must return again and yet again to the records as vouched for and interpreted by the best powers of contemporary scholarship and in what these furnish to us we must find the materials for our portrait of Him.

In this case we shall find fact more wonderful than fiction or imagination. As we, like the centurion, humbly approach the human Figure of Our Lord, we, like Him, may be granted still that divine power of insight which shall enable us to see in that Figure the Lord of all spiritual forces. The great gain in the region of thought

in the past hundred years has been the resolve to see things as they are : men have begun to grasp the literal import of the promise : " Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Everywhere the question is being asked : What are the facts ? What is true ? We need not be surprised or dismayed at the application of this method and spirit to the evidence of the New Testament for our Lord's life on earth. Such a book as Professor Glover's " Jesus of History," is worthy of our study because in its title and aim it shows us what is essential for our time.

Others working afresh over the material may find that something has been omitted which ought rightly to have been included, something included which stricter method would exclude, but the object is to see Our Lord as He was—as the centurion saw Him and others of His contemporaries. We desire to hear afresh some of the teaching which they heard, no more, no less : to see the acts and bearing which they saw, no more, no less. But we shall not stop there. We shall pray that we, like them, may be given spiritual insight : that we, like them, may be led to see in and through the manhood the divine, and in the light of that insight we may be led to admit much into the evidence which at the first cold scrutiny we were inclined or even driven to exclude. If He be indeed this spiritual Lord, what may He not do ? What may not befall Him ? " Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." As we contemplate the Jesus of History we shall not exclude from this history the Christ of experience. Numbers saw Him that day in Capernaum : one saw more deeply than the rest, " and Jesus marvelled and said, ' In no man in Israel have I found so great faith.' "

Here we may reverently combine the two parts of the story, and be thankful for this hope of progress—of a vision which may increase in depth and clearness. " There is," as has been well said, " the always double

apprehension, feeling, conviction at work in every specifically religious act and state. There is, on the one hand, the sense of a Reality not merely human—of a real experience of this Reality: and there is, at the same time, the sense that this real experience is imperfect, that it is not co-extensive with the Reality experienced, that it does not exhaust that reality." "Lord I believe: help Thou mine unbelief." That is the constantly repeated prayer of the soul upon its upward way. If we would quicken our insight and deepen our faith, we need something of the Spirit of William Law's "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." "The greater men's business," he says, "the more need they have of method in spiritual things to prevent the power of that business over their hearts, to secure them from sinking into merely worldly tempers, to preserve a sense and taste of heavenly things in the mind. A little time regularly and constantly employed to this end will do great things and produce mighty effects. And it is for want of considering devotion in this light as something that is to be improved by art and method and a diligent use of the best helps that so many people live and die strangers to that spirit which, by a prudent use of proper means, they might have enjoyed in a high degree."

"To preserve the sense and taste of heavenly things," to go "from strength to strength" and vision to vision, to see more in a passage from Scripture than we saw a year ago—that is the path of interest and of progress in view of an inexhaustible reality. A good test is supplied by our attitude towards our Creed. How many of us were thrilled afresh as by a transcendent revelation—a new Epiphany—when we repeated the Creed this morning? Conventionally we all hold it: we should be vexed and angry if anyone said to us: "You are not a Christian." And yet there is a difference from our ordinary attitude when anyone like the centurion recognizes with living conviction Christ's moral grandeur or His lordship in the

spiritual world, and admits these as a real power into his life. For such the world is filled anew with light. "Open Thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things." "O send out Thy light and Thy truth : let them lead me and bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling."

There is one further thought, and here, I think, comes in our gain from giving full attention to the facts as they come before us in this and similar stories. We might have been inclined to despair in view of past limitations, did we not find **Our Lord** beside us as we awaken to the possibility of progress in our recognition of the capacity of human lives for higher things. It is easy to scorn the Jews of **Our Lord's** day for their self-centred nationalism : it is difficult to realize that a similar danger hangs over us all.

It has been said that "the man whose self-consciousness would be on the alert against his own selfish instincts has often no suspicion of the injustice of his national instincts. In every nation of Europe, from England and France to Russia and Turkey, in almost every nation in the world from the Americans to the Chinese and Finns, the same whisper from below the threshold sounds incessantly in men's ears. We are the pick and flower of nations : the only nation that is really generous and brave and just. Other nations may have fine characteristics : we only are normal and exactly right. Other nations boast and are aggressive ; we are modest and claim only what is our barest due, though we cannot help seeing our general superiority. We are above all things reasonable. Our yoke is a pure blessing to all who bear it." Such is too often, it is to be feared, the attitude of the children of the Kingdom. It is, at any rate, one of grave responsibility if not of danger. Probably one of the first things that we all have to learn as we set out to reconstruct the world is the possibility of the fullest recognition and the highest experience in people outside our nation, our class, our circle. "Many shall come."

"Many shall come from the east and the west and shall recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven." Faith in these "many" is the first condition of union with them or of peace and progress for ourselves. And what we need to learn outside our own nation we need equally to learn within it. The first task in a true democracy is that of improving the condition of the everyday man, woman, and child—spiritually and morally, intellectually and physically. It suits us to ignore or to depreciate the capacity for a higher life in other classes and races than our own. By asserting that they are incapable of profiting by opportunities, we excuse ourselves from the duty of providing them. To take a single and quite obvious instance: Many people send their boys and girls to schools with wide-stretching playing-fields and recognize the importance of recreation in their lives. They forget the hundreds and thousands of boys and girls who are excluded from any form of healthy recreation or are forced to be mere spectators of others' games by the way in which we build and own our cities and villages, without any common open spaces worth the name. I hardly know of any more pressing problem, but as you pass up the scale of human activity and thought you will supply other instances in which we are equally jealous or indifferent. We need to move towards a more generous outlook. If the darkness is not to overtake us which has covered so many other children of the Kingdom, we must be prepared more frankly to recognize possibilities of progress, to follow more ungrudgingly than heretofore the path of personal service, to share our spiritual gains even more readily than our material goods. In all such matters we may well despair of ourselves in view of past limitations until we realize in utter reverence that Our Lord stands beside us to reveal the hope of widening vision in our human nature.

These then—a deeper insight, a broader outlook—these are two of the lessons which come to us in this story

touching our personal religion, touching our international and national life. In the one case Our Lord stands above us as Leader of all the spiritual host : " speak the word only and my servant shall be healed " ; in the other He is our Companion revealing to us in perfect sympathy out of His own human experience the path of life and hope and broadening vision. " When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CHRIST'S ETERNAL GODHEAD

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND SAMUEL KIRSHBAUM KNIGHT, D.D.

COLOSSIANS ii. 9.

“ For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

THE value of a phrase has been demonstrated over and over again. Political leaders, philosophers, religious teachers have often achieved greater influence through the invention or adoption of a catchword than they have been able to gain through the most laborious and complete exposition of the principles they have desired to recommend to their fellow-men. We are apt to ignore or distrust systems that cannot be formulated in a sentence or two, while those which can be summarized in a telling epigram are at once commended by their directness and apparent lucidity.

But this advantage is not seldom illusory. We can, too easily, become the victims of a phrase. On the one hand we may treat it as the final and complete expression of truth, and so make it a barrier against all further progress. On the other hand it may become the meaningless shibboleth of an ignorance which is content to use language it has never tried to understand.

Christianity has not seldom been the victim of such phrases, and the history of the Church would seem to urge us to challenge every expression which gains a prominent place in religious language. It may be true, it may be of great importance, but if we would have it

fulfil its proper purpose we must not only be careful about its precise meaning and notice its necessary limitations, but bring it into relation with all the varied elements of Christian life and faith.

Now there are two phrases current in present-day religious language so constantly repeated, and of such wide acceptance, that it is clearly our duty to take stock of them and inquire into their true value.

The first phrase to which I refer is "The Christ of Experience."

During the latter part of the last century men found themselves for the first time in possession of the facts of Nature and of life which science and criticism had disclosed to them, and it became apparent that Christians must revise their method of stating the grounds of their acceptance of the revelation of God in Christ. In the unsettlement of thought in which they found themselves they naturally and rightly appealed to their own experience of what the Christian Faith had become to themselves. Stress was laid on the fact that men and women of all nations affirmed the reality of Christ's power because of what they knew of it in their lives. In defence of their faith they offered what was to them the incontrovertible evidence of experience—an experience which was manifest in lives of the greatest variety in age, knowledge and civilization. They met the acknowledged difficulties raised against the Faith by the affirmation that they believed that Christ was their Lord and Master, their Saviour and God, because of what they knew of His power in their lives.

The importance of this testimony needs to be appreciated more and more. Anyone who would study the evidence for the truth of Christianity must take it into account. You may doubt this theory or that; you may discredit the testimony of the Gospels; you may say miracles do not happen; you may declare that the doctrines of historic Christianity are the relics of an obsolete philosophy; we will pass these things by for

the present, till you have accounted for the Christ of Experience.

It is not surprising that Christians take their stand here. They cannot do otherwise. They know their Lord's gracious power. He has come to their hearts with the assurance of His forgiveness, His gift of peace, His enabling might, His recreating life, and from countless tongues there comes the affirmation, "I am not ashamed : for I know Him Whom I have believed."

And yet we must not disguise from ourselves the danger that when this testimony becomes crystallized into the phrase "The Christ of Experience," it may be a cloak for much which is harmful. It is clear that when men rely only on their own experience they are apt to make their religion altogether subjective, till it is confined to the sphere of emotion and that high exaltation which is so largely dependent on temperament. So it has not seldom happened that men have alleged as their experience of Christ that which corresponds to no objective reality, and under the shelter of a great phrase have sought a sanction for what, after all, has been the work of their own undisciplined imaginations.

Thoughtful men have felt this very strongly, and in their effort to avoid placing the evidence of Christianity on such subjective grounds as these, they have emphasized the fact that Christ is a historic Figure, and that, independently of our feelings about Him, He has His place in the records of our race. He lived and died at a particular period in our history. He did certain things which have their influence even now. He is to be numbered among the great men of history. He founded the Christian Church, He instituted the Sacraments. Thus we have the phrase, "The Historic Christ." By employing it, it is desired to draw attention to the facts recorded in the New Testament, and to ask that they should be studied as historical. Men are invited to turn to the Gospels just as they would turn to any other ancient documents

with the desire to test their truth. They are asked to account for them. How came it about that the Evangelists could describe such a gracious Figure as we find in their writings ?

This appeal has been more than justified. To quote the well-known words of a writer, who did not accept all that is implied in historic Christianity, it may be declared, "It is of no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superseded by the tradition of His followers. Who among His disciples or among their proselytes were capable of inventing the sayings described as those of Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, still less the early Christian writers." (J. S. Mill, "Essays on Nature," p. 253.)

But even when this is granted, we find something further in Christ. Perhaps no better advice can be given to one who feels his hold of Christianity growing slack, or who is dissatisfied with its presentation in our pulpits or in modern theological literature, than to urge him to return to the study of the Gospels merely as historical records, and to take the Christ there pictured as the pattern of his own life and conduct. Let him strive to be like that Man. Let him make the Historic Christ, known as Jesus of Nazareth, the standard of his own manhood, and endeavour to follow the blessed steps of that most holy life. And if he does this, will he not also confess that he follows One Who, after all, is something more than Man? That the phrase "the Historic Christ," falls short of what he has learnt; that there is a power in the Nazarene which tells of something more than Man, of One Who can only be described in the terms used by His wondering disciples, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"?

It is evident, then, that neither of these phrases, "the Christ of Experience," nor "the Historic Christ," though they represent great facts, adequately describes all that

Our Lord stands for in Christianity. Nor even when we combine them do they match the truth. Christ transcends both human experience and human history. He is greater than these, He rises higher than our measures. He mounts far beyond our thoughts.

What is it, then, in Christ which takes Him out of the category of our manhood ? How can we more adequately describe Him ?

The New Testament writers have not failed to anticipate and answer our questions by affirming the eternal Godhead of Christ. They declare this in different ways, they express it in a variety of terms, but as to the fact they are absolutely concordant.

It is the central message of the New Testament. But perhaps of all St. Paul's writings it is most fully set forth in the Epistle to the Colossians.

Christ, declares the Apostle, is the Image of the Invisible God : not only because in Him there is the chief manifestation of the Divine Nature, but because in Him resides the totality of Divine powers and attributes. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All that is Divine is Christ's. In Heaven as in earth, over things invisible as over things visible, He is the Creator and King. "For in Him were all things created in the Heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things have been created through Him and unto Him ; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Plainly, if we are to accept the account of Christ as given to us here, we cannot be content to measure Him by our experience nor by our conception of His place in history. Of course it is possible to put aside these clear affirmations of the Godhead of Christ by describing them as the relics of a bygone philosophy with no value to modern thought and no power in men's lives. But as a matter of fact the evidence is all the other way. The one

absolutely impossible conception of God to a thoughtful man in the present day is that which represents Him merely as a transcendent Ruler Who works His will from a distance, or Who is content to be an occasional visitor to the world He has created. We must frankly accept the view—of direct Divine agency in Nature from end to end, the belief in a God in Whom not only we, but all things have their being, or we must banish Him altogether.

In other words, we must accept that truth of which the Incarnation is the highest expression and abiding guarantee. Christ, God in Man, is the assurance we seek that the world and all that is in it is informed and controlled by that which is Divine. The operations of Nature, its beauty and terror, its life and death, its ordered courses, and what appear to be its violations of all order are alike under the control of One Who is "at once the soul of each, and God of all."

And what is true of Nature is true of human life. Christ the Incarnate One, "in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," is allied to men so really and so intimately that we have all received of His fulness. He as God lives in us: in Him we are fulfilled. He endows our aspirations after goodness, lays hold of our perplexities and failures, confronts our sins and sorrows with a new creating power, and consecrates our manhood afresh by the gift of His Divine grace. Just because Christ is God, no human being is outside the sphere of His intimate fellowship. The darkness of ignorance is not proof against His entrance, for even in the grossest superstition He brings some rays of the truth to comfort men in their desperate bewilderment: even in the foulest life He retains something of His Image: while He ever stands to welcome and encourage every effort after truth, every good work, every attempt to promote righteousness, justice and peace in the world.

Nothing in the whole world is more definitely

practical and important than a sincere faith in the eternal sovereignty of Christ Incarnate.

I am sure the truth we most need to realize in the present day is this absolute supremacy of Christ, by Whom all things were made and in Whom they all continue, and for Whose loving will they are employed more and more perfectly.

The Christ of Experience is a most gracious fact. But experience is so changing and so uncertain. Men are apt to be depressed by a hundred things, and often the soul feels far off from the source of its joy and gladness. The Lord passes out of sight and men are afraid. Then it is that they may reflect on Christ's eternal Godhead. We may have no token of His Presence, but faith knows He is there behind the dark cloud, guiding all things according to His infinitive love.

So, too, the Historic Christ may inspire us with His pledge of manhood's greatness and His call to imitate His example. But the Historic Christ is after all but a distant Figure. The more we strive to follow Him the more conscious we are of the feebleness of our efforts. If we are to continue in our discipleship He must be to us the Living Lord, Who has power to guide the destinies of men to the achievement of His own glorious purpose, and to endow them with His own regenerating power. The measure of Christ's worth is not our appreciation of it. It is as exhaustless as the love of God, its power depends on Him. Ours is the duty of worship and dependence, humble acceptance of the gifts of His grace and a faithful use of them. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full, Who is the Head of all principality and power."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

BY THE REVEREND FREDERICK ARTHUR CLARKE, M.A.

ST. MATTHEW xiii. 24, 25.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field," etc.

THE Parable of the Tares is one of the most difficult in the New Testament. No doubt there are others—such as the Unjust Steward, or the Wedding Garment—in which there is far greater uncertainty as to the actual interpretation. Questions of this sort are answered in this case by Our Lord Himself, Who gave to His disciples an explanation of the parable and a key to its main details. The real difficulty is about the practical drift of the parable, its bearing on the problems of conduct and duty. And because of this uncertainty, the parable has played an important part in great Church controversy from the time of St. Augustine onwards.

I cannot pretend to clear up these time-honoured difficulties. But a preacher may be useful if he helps people to *think*, without always telling them *what* to think.

The story itself is very vivid and interesting, and throws a wonderful light on some of life's deepest mysteries—the origin of evil, the intertwined relations of evil and good. We can easily understand that there is in the East—as travellers assure us—a pernicious weed, call it tares, darnel, or bastard wheat, which in the early stages of its growth cannot be distinguished from real wheat, though

later this difference is very evident. Also that in Eastern countries a common form of malicious mischief is to sow with this vile weed a field already sown with wheat. The application is easy in more than one way, though Our Lord, as His explanation shows, is apparently not thinking of the devil's work at the beginning of man's history in introducing evil into the world which God had made and had pronounced "very good." It is true Our Lord explained the field as the world, but that is because He is dealing with the Church in the world, militant (and imperfect) here on earth. His opening words tell us that He is teaching us about the Kingdom of Heaven, i.e., the Church. At the end He tells us that the Angels will gather *out of His Kingdom* all things that offend and them that do iniquity. Moreover, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man," not the Creator of the world, but the Incarnate Saviour, bringing to men the good news of God, founding His Church.

The Sower here is the same as in the more familiar parable of the Sower, Who sowed "the Word of the Kingdom." And though in our parable to-day the good seed is not "the Word," but "the sons of the Kingdom," the two expressions come practically to the same thing. For the sons of the Kingdom are produced *through* the sowing in men's hearts of that Word which makes all things new, and regenerates those who receive it.

This shows, again, that the tares who are "the sons of the evil one" are not simply bad men in the world, but false Christians, pretended or counterfeit Christians in the Church. Our Lord is not contradicting the common belief that God—and God alone—made of one all men throughout the world. He is not teaching the monstrous doctrine taught later by Gnostics and Manicheans, that a part of mankind derive their origin from God, and another part from the evil one. He means that as some men are made true Christians by receiving the Gospel, the Word of Jesus Christ into their hearts, so others, by having false

anti-Christian principles implanted in their hearts by the devil, become false, spurious, sham Christians.

No doubt part of Our Lord's object in this teaching is to warn men against over-sanguine and visionary hopes of the purity and perfectness of the Church, and at the same time to point them forward to a time when all that mars and defiles it shall be done away. But is there nothing for the practical guidance of the Church, forbidding a persecuting policy, commanding tolerance and forbearance? Some of the Fathers have virtually denied this. So have Reformers like Luther and Beza, who insist not only on the duty of the Church to expel unworthy members, but also on the duty of the State to put them to the sword. And this, more or less, has always been the Puritan ideal, that the Church should purge herself at least of all who do not reach a satisfactory moral and religious standard. Indeed, it has been maintained that according to the Parable the toleration of unworthy Christians is not our business, but the business of God and the Angels. The Angels are the reapers: the Angels, then, may be those servants of the householder who asked permission to root up the tares and were forbidden to do so. Certainly there is some awkwardness in supposing that loyal Christians are represented in the parable *both* by the good wheat and by the over-zealous servants. Yet we may be pretty sure that the parable *does* teach the lesson of tolerance even on the assumption.

If the Angels, with their more perfect knowledge and faithfulness, are forbidden to root up the tares, for fear of damage to the wheat, how much more dangerous must it be for *us* to attempt it, with our ignorance, our prejudice, blindness, the mixture of good and evil in our motives? Surely the Holy Spirit has been leading the Church—and very much by this very parable—to the truth that tolerance and forbearance are Christian virtues, nay more, Christian *duties*.

There is an instructive contrast between this parable

and part of the parable of the Sower. *There*, the seed that fell among thorns is choked by the thorns and made unfruitful, and it is implied that we ought to make war upon the thorns and try to get rid of them. *Here*, the tares are to be allowed to grow for the sake of the wheat. Of course the explanation is that in the earlier parable the thorns are evil tendencies, desires, habits within the heart, which is the soil where the good seed is trying to grow ; and here tolerance may be fatal. The tares are unworthy Christians outside us ; and here tolerance is a duty. The one parable deals with evil within us, the other with evil around us.

But this distinction, important as it is, must not be carried so far as to suggest to us that tolerance is our only duty towards those about us. Tolerance may easily become indifference ; and there is no harder practical problem for the earnest Christian than how to be patient and forbearing as God is, and yet to war zealously against evil under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ. Perhaps the utmost that can be said is that the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of love not of hate. If the wheat could get rid of the tares, if the Puritan could drive from his Church or sect all whom he regards as unreal Christians, we know what the result would be. The spiritual wheat, at any rate, would rapidly degenerate into tares ; the zeal for purity would soon become bigotry, anger, hate, cruelty, and the deadliest spiritual pride. And in the opposite direction, thank God, the fixity of Nature as described in the parable misrepresents the freedom and power of grace ; for one remarks that, if the impatient zeal of the servants were not restrained, they would not only be rooting up wheat in mistake for tares, but they would be pulling up plants which to-day might be noxious weeds, but to-morrow would have been wholesome corn.

And with this hint, I think we may see in the parable, not so much an exhortation to the good to be patient of evil men in prospect of that final separation which is

to be made some day, as an appeal from the loving heart of Jesus the Saviour, an appeal to His friends for their sympathy with Him in His willingness to suffer and to wait, to bear and to forbear, in the accomplishment of His task of plucking the blind ones back from the abyss, and winning over the children of the evil one to be children of the Kingdom. For God sent not His son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him should be saved.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

VULTURES—OR EAGLES ?

BY THE REVEREND ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

ST. MATTHEW xxiv. 28.

“ Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

By “ eagles ” are probably meant the birds which we call vultures—a bird of the same kind, being a large bird of prey, but of a far less noble race. With the eagle we commonly associate ideas of beauty, majesty, strength and swiftness ; it is the king of birds. With the vulture we rather associate ideas of loathsomeness, rapacity, and voraciousness. It is the type of insatiable and pitiless greed. There can be little doubt that it was of vultures rather than of eagles that Our Lord was speaking in the text, if only for the reason that the vulture is in the East the much more common bird of the two, and also the one that is specially notorious for being attracted suddenly and from long distances by the prospect of carrion. The eagle feeds on creatures that it has killed for itself : the vulture devours what it finds lying dead. “ Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the *vultures* be gathered together.”

Travellers tell us how literally and strikingly true this saying is. If an animal is sorely wounded and lies down to die, or if it sickens and its hours are plainly numbered, forthwith and almost as if by magic the vultures begin to flock towards it. For miles in different directions a

ghastly procession is seen hurrying across the sky towards the expiring animal, where a few minutes before not a bird was to be seen. They seem to have scented or sighted their prey from afar, and to have signalled to one another that a banquet is being prepared for them. And there, all around the poor dying beast, the foul creatures sit and wait, watching its last agonies, aggravating the pains of death by their loathsome presence. It matters not what the dying animal may be, the highest or the vilest, the noblest or the most unclean. All are alike to the vulture : every kind of living creature, whether man or brute, horse or reptile, when the hand of death is once upon it, he marks as his prey. And he scarcely waits until his victim has breathed its last before he swoops upon it to begin his voracious meal. Terrible tales have been told of dying men fighting with these ghastly visitants and expiring in the horrid fray—a fight, not for life, but to escape being devoured alive.

What does Our Lord mean when He says, “ Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together ” ? The words have passed into a proverb which is capable of various applications. Among the commonest are such as make the vultures represent those rapacious and merciless men who are ever on the lookout to profit by the falls and misfortunes of their fellows. There is the man of *shattered health*, about whose sick-bed all who can hope to gain anything by his death keep crowding ; watching with indecent and scarcely disguised eagerness for the end which perhaps may enrich them. There is the man of *shattered fortune*, on whose broken estate all who have the smallest claim upon him forthwith lay a grasping hand, and make the ruin complete. And there is the man of *shattered character*, about whom all the world had formerly spoken well, but for whom no one has any longer a good word to say. And not only so, but against whom all those are ready to fling mud and stones, who have the miserable belief that they exalt

themselves by pulling others down. Of all these is the saying true, "Wheresoever the carcase is"—whether it be the body of the *dying* man, or of the *ruined* man, or of the *discredited* man—"Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures" of human society "be gathered together."

It would not be difficult to find other illustrations of the proverb in the manifold relations of men with their fellow-men. But it may be doubted whether any such meanings were in the mind of Our Lord, when He used it. His parables and proverbs are not like those that are the outcome of mere human experience or cynicism. They penetrate far deeper than those maxims and fables which teach lessons of prudence and shrewdness, or at best some moral principle.

"Never *man* thus spake." His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. Jesus Christ, with the other world and its eternal truths ever in His thoughts, looked at all things from a point of view to which only the best of men, and they only at rare intervals, attain. Thus the words which He spake were "spirit and life": and it is living, spiritual truths that we must look for in them, not mere generalities about the facts of human society. We shall miss the deep significance of this striking utterance if we limit it either to any single historical event, such as the gathering of the Roman legions to prey upon the fallen carcase of the city of Jerusalem, or to any particulars in the intercourse of men with one another, such as that of social vultures preying upon the calamities of their fellow-men.

It is a *spiritual* victim and its *spiritual* foes that are here spoken of, and that perhaps in more ways than one. The fallen soul, the soul that has fallen into grievous sin, the soul that is perhaps already dead in repeated and unrepented sin—that is the prey round which the spiritual vultures begin to gather. It is sore stricken, it is dying, it is already dead, and without a miracle of Divine grace

cannot be restored to life again ; and they have marked it as their prey. Have not some of us learned from sad experience, how, when once we have yielded willingly and deliberately to sin, temptations seem to thicken around us ? Wickedness of which we never dreamed before occurs to our minds. Across what was once the clear sky of our souls, loathsome things come flying one after another with hideous persistency, and sit down to wait till we surrender to them. Opportunities of going wrong, and of committing other, and still worse, sins, seem to open out on all sides of us in a way that we never experienced before.

We appear to have entered another world, and to be living under new and horrible conditions. And, indeed, this is not far from the truth. We have passed over out of life into death, and have placed ourselves in the power of the enemy. We have given up our souls to be a prey, and its numerous foes are gathering themselves together. And we have a horror even greater than that of the dying creature in the wilderness : we know that it is *our own act* that has summoned the vultures to gather together.

There is yet another way in which this terrible saying holds good of our spiritual lives—one bearing a closer analogy to the case of the vultures round the dying animal. It is when we are on our death-beds that Satan tries his utmost to *keep* us as his own, if he has got us into his power ; to *win* us for his own, if by God's mercy we have escaped from him. One of his common devices is to tempt us to despair ; to tempt us to think that we have sinned so deeply that it is hopeless to think that God has really forgiven us, or will forgive us. And so when the sick man's end approaches the ghosts of the past begin to rise up in his memory to vex and torment him. From every part of his life they come flying in a long train across the clear vision of his mind, and settle down to haunt his dying bed. The sins of childhood and of youth, long since forgotten, apparently never to be remembered again ; the sins of middle age, and it may be of old age,

which, though not forgotten, have never seemed so hideous before: these are the vultures which gather together round the dying sinner, and strive to keep him back from God's infinite mercy, or to tear him away from it.

And here again the sinner has the misery of knowing that it is through his own folly and wickedness that the vultures are able to gather together. The remedy in both cases is the same—repentance; honest, hearty, humble, and trusting repentance. It is impossible to repent too soon; it is impossible to repent too often; it is impossible to repent so often as to weary the All-merciful God. Our Blessed Lord Himself has told us that seven times in a day, nay seventy times seven, we are to forgive our brother or our neighbour, if he says, "I repent and am sorry for what I have done." Do you think that God will be less merciful than He orders us to be; will show less patience than He expects from us? As soon as we have sinned, no matter how grievously, no matter how repeatedly, let us go at once to Him and ask for pardon, and for grace to do better; and let us never doubt that our prayer, if it be heartfelt and earnest, is heard.

This is what Christ by His Death and Resurrection has won for us—the right and the power to die unto sin and to rise again from it: yes, to rise again and again and again from the death of sin in humble reliance on the almighty power and unwearying love of Him Who died to free us from the power of death. In His strength we can defy the thronging temptations which assault us so mercilessly when once we have deliberately given way to them. By His side we can beat off even the persecuting memories of past sins; because we have repented and He has promised forgiveness. And thus the proverb acquires a changed and glorious meaning. Wheresoever the Body of the *Lord* is, thither will His servants be gathered together.

Some of you will remember that this was a common

method of explaining the text in the early Church. Ancient interpreters loved to make the body which attracted such multitudes of creatures represent the Body of Him Who by being lifted up from the earth drew all men unto Him : in which case, of course, the birds which are gathered together by the presence of the Body must be the company of those whose hearts have echoed the Prophet's prayer—" Draw us, and we will run after Thee." By " the body " the Fathers have understood to be meant Christ, and by " the eagles," Christ's followers.

We will not stay to consider whether or no the context favours this ancient and in itself beautiful interpretation of the parable. It will be more to our purpose to inquire whether, as a matter of fact, this interpretation is true of ourselves. We have seen how sadly the less beautiful explanation of the proverb coincides with the spiritual experience of those who have gone astray. How far does this other explanation coincide with our *personal* experience? Doubtless it is most true that wheresoever the Body of the Lord is, thither His servants will be gathered together. But do *we* know anything of this attractiveness? Do we feel it? And, if so, do we yield to it? These are questions which in the hearts of some of us ought to raise anxious thoughts.

Do we really and indeed feel that Jesus Christ is to us supremely attractive? That where His Presence in any special manner seems to be, thither we are strongly, almost irresistibly, drawn? That where any work can be done for Him, there we are foremost among those who respond to the invitation to come and labour? What a miserable answer some of us must in honesty give to questions such as these! How often does the thought of Jesus Christ seem to have no sweetness in it! How often do we feel disposed to avoid rather than to frequent those means of grace which bring us nearer to Him! And when any opportunity presents itself to us of helping forward His work upon earth, how often the first thought that

occurs to us is to seek about for some respectable excuse for rejecting the opportunity. In us there is little enough of the keenness and swiftness and strength of the eagle as he darts forward with unerring sight and unflagging wing towards his natural goal. We are, indeed, "slow of heart to believe" and "slow of heart" to love.

Experiences such as these may well make us anxious and humble: but they must not make us despair. They show that there is much that is grievously deficient in us: but (unless contentedly and carelessly acquiesced in) they do not show that all is hopelessly wrong. We must be on our guard against drawing two opposite but equally disastrous conclusions from such facts in our spiritual condition. First, that because we find no attractiveness in Christ's service, therefore all religion is necessarily burdensome. Secondly, that because we find no attractiveness in Christ's service, therefore we are outcasts and in no sense servants of His. Do not for one moment believe either the one conclusion or the other. The sorrowful experiences of one frail, struggling soul are no measure of the fulness of Christ. What God and His service have hitherto *seemed* to us is no standard by which to judge of what they *are* and *can* be. There are some who take a conscious delight in the freshness of the air and the brightness of the sunshine. There are others who partake of these blessings almost as if they were unaware of them. But the blessing may be equally great to both. It may be God's will that seldom or never in this world shall we feel the sweetness of His presence, the nobility and beauty of His service. Let us not be cast down by this.

So long as we *yearn* to love Him, let us be humbled, but not in despair, because as yet we feel no love for Him. So long as we do strive to work for Christ, let us not be impatient or cast down because as yet we do not feel that His yoke is easy and His burden light. Those have need to tremble who have *no desire* to love Him, and who

shirk the work in which they find no pleasure. God in His mercy keep us from this : and then let us leave all else trustingly in His hands. Even in this world the day may yet come when the eagle's eye and the eagle's swift-ness will be granted to us. But, if not, we have His sure promise that in the world to come the darkness which blinds us shall be taken away, and we shall see the King in His beauty.

SEPTUAGESIMA

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

BY THE REVEREND LORING W. BATTEN, D.D.

GENESIS ii. 9.

“The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

IN the garden of Eden, which this beautiful story makes the scene of the first human life, God made to grow from the ground every kind of tree pleasant to the sight and good for food. These were all produced for the special benefit of man, and he was permitted freely to avail himself of their fruit. But there was one tree in that garden of whose fruit man was strictly forbidden to eat under penalty of instant death. The meaning of this stringent prohibition will need to be faced presently. But now we must not digress from the story itself.

The man and woman at all events took the injunction seriously, and were obedient enough until a new personality is brought upon the stage, the serpent, who does not say eat and die ; but eat and open your eyes and you will live. God knows that your eating will not result in death, he says, but in a knowledge akin to His own. The woman is persuaded, and both she and her husband eat the forbidden fruit of the tree. That tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The pair ate its fruit, and their eyes were opened, and they learned a great lesson that day ; for they knew that they had sinned.

But what does all this strange story mean ? Certainly

no one any longer takes the narrative literally as a historic fact. But there are still some who hold tenaciously to the strange interpretation which begins innocently enough in St Paul, and finds its full monstrous development in Calvinism. Man was created, so this school holds, as pure as an Angel, and if Adam had obeyed God, to this day sin would have been barred from the world, and we should all have been living the life of perfect saints. But Adam did eat, and his sin carried with it such a train of dire consequences, that if he could have foreseen in the least what would follow from his eating, he would rather have hung himself upon one of the branches of the tree than indulged in its fruit. For the guilt of Adam was transmitted to the race, so that every child born of woman comes into the world deeply polluted by this sin of Adam, and is an object worthy only of God's righteous wrath. According to this view the die was cast once for all, and there was no changing after that. The issue of man's fate was settled for all time in a moment, and after that downfall all subsequent ages of men stand condemned and helpless unless by some chance God picks them out as objects of His especial favour.

This whole conception seems to me to be horribly in error at every point. I mention it, however, not to controvert it, for the mere statement of it is enough to condemn it, but because in the sweeping away of this gross interpretation of a beautiful piece of poetry, man has not been careful to discriminate between the true and the false, and the foundation has been despised because the building erected upon it was so hideous.

The story of the tree of knowledge is in itself a beautiful one, full of poetical conceptions, and of religious truth. It was a story which belonged to primitive man, and was not peculiar to the Hebrews, though it takes on a religious purity in the Hebrew Scriptures which it does not have elsewhere. It will be easy to see how much truth there is in the story, if we can begin by making the mind a

tabula rasa, a clean page, upon which God's truth may be written unhindered by prejudicing opinions.

In the first place, then, we must note that the writer of this story was a philosopher as well as poet and historian. He was not devoid, as so many of his interpreters are, of the Divine gift of imagination. He was concerned with the origin of things, and he knew that the truth could be told even when he had not a single historic fact to build upon. The problem he was dealing with now was the dawning of moral consciousness, the way by which man came to know the distinction between good and evil. The fable of the tree of knowledge, current among many people, served as the outward frame for his lesson. He is not concerned about the tree, but about the opening of the eyes morally, so that man had a moral standard by which to measure his acts.

Whether man was the result of a special creation, or of an evolutionary process, as most people believe now, there must have come to him a time when he first stood face to face with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, when in other words he realized for the first time that there is a right on one side, and a wrong on the other; and that his doings were not to be estimated solely by considerations of personal pleasure or convenience, but were to be measured by an ethical standard which he now for the first time perceived.

Without any appeal therefore to questions about revelation or inspiration, we can see that the sacred writer is correct in his main contention. But is it possible to go further, and test his accuracy in other particulars? It is possible, but it is only possible in the light of the knowledge which evolution provides. The modern biologist has laid before us a most startling fact, viz. that in the life of a single vertebrate animal there is written the history of all animal life. Man bears in his fully developed and highly specialized body the earmarks which tell the story of the kinship of the whole animal creation,

and point out the stages of physical development. Just so may we not see in the moral life of any true man, the history of the moral struggles of the human race? From birth to old age is the same span as from Adam to ourselves. Verily with God a thousand years are as one day. We all have to go back to Adam, and travel with fearful speed through all the ages. We may stop where Adam stopped with the mere possession of the knowledge, or we may go on to heights undreamed of by him. But there is no escape from that tree, for it is planted in every garden: it may grow unnoticed for ever so long a time; it may be overlooked in the multitude of other joys and cares, but sooner or later the serpent will come and show us that tree and tell us the wonderful effects of its fruit.

There is a period in childhood when the moral consciousness dawns, when the child is placed in the garden of Eden, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before him. Do we realize that that is the most critical moment in the whole life? Even Calvin has not exaggerated the importance of this critical moment in the history of the race. Mothers sometimes keep a record of their children's development. On such a day baby cut a tooth; on another, he took a step by himself; on another he first spoke the sweetest word that ever fell upon a woman's ear—broken and inarticulate at first, but by and by it becomes plain—"Mother." But did you ever hear of a mother's journal containing a record of the child's experience when he first stands face to face with that awful tree which grows by the side of every life's way? Did you ever hear of a record like this: to-day my boy disobeyed me; but I have opened his eyes, and he knows now that he has done wrong?

I think we can see now also how much truth there is in the idea that in some way we are bound up with Adam in his transgression, so that St. Paul could truly say, "In Adam all die." For Adam's experience was the common

lot of all human kind. His fall by no means involves ours, does not even prejudice our fate in favour of falling. But he is still our father by the kinship of a common experience.

In this light we can understand the story. The eating of the tree does not mark a change in the character of Adam's life, but in his knowledge of life. It is not true that before this moment Adam was sinless, and after it for ever guilty. We must make a distinction between innocent and sinless. The eating of this tree marks the stage in every life when we pass from innocence to sinlessness if we are strong, or to sinfulness if we are weak. Adam was innocent, but not sinless. He was innocent because he was ignorant, and when he obtained his knowledge he paid for it a fearful price.

One may say that this may be true, but it is not in the story. Yes, it is in the story. The writer knew, and shows that he knew, that the change produced by the tree was not the manner of Adam's life, but only his knowledge; for does he not tell us as the result of their eating: "and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked"? They had been naked before, but they had not been ashamed of it. But, in the light of their present knowledge, they saw that they were something more than two animals, and were bound together by moral relations. Adam may have been a better man after this experience than he was before; we can't tell about that; we certainly do not know that he was worse, but we are sure that he was wiser.

We find an illuminating illustration in the life of a child. The baby at first has scarcely moral qualities at all. Its state is that of innocence. It may do a host of wrong things which we judge to be harmless because their true character is unknown to it. We laugh at a parrot's swearing, but it is not so funny in a man. Now there will come to the child a time when he will understand certain of his acts in their moral relations; I say certain of his

acts, for I fear we never reach the point where we understand them all. Do you not see now that the child does just the same things he did all along in his innocence, but that the difference to him is great as between Heaven and earth, because of the coming in of moral consciousness? And this goes on all through life. The man who grows in grace and in favour with God and man, is ever discovering fresh aspects of the nakedness with which he began his life. He is constantly perceiving something which he has done all his life ignorantly, and at which God has therefore winked, but which looks entirely different to-day because his eyes are freshly opened by the tree of knowledge, and he can never do the thing again without knowing that it is evil. The tree in the garden is not therefore something which we have to face but once in our lives, still less is it something which one man faced once for all for the whole race; but rather it stands close by us all our lives, and from it we are asked to eat again and again, and its fruit never loses its power of opening the eyes.

We are, I think, in a position now to understand the straight command with which God guarded the tree from man: "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." If the tree was all that the serpent said, if it **was** good for food, pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise, why should God hedge it about, why not invite man freely to eat and to know? Very likely there is not an absolute truth here; very likely the writer has made the prohibition too final; but do we not all know the peril of dawning consciousness? Is not that stage the critical point in life which builds or ruins, which lifts up to a high plane, or casts down to destruction?

A man has been sick with a terrible disease, during which he has been wandering in his mind. He was insane through weakness. Then comes the day when his ravings stop. Is that day all joy? Do not his anxious friends tremble and fear as they see the crisis approaching? For they know indeed that the ravings may be all over,

but do they not also know that the crisis may reveal the dreadful secret that the mind has gone for ever ?

The father and mother see this tree with its alluring fruit before the innocent eyes of their child. Do they invite the child to help himself ? No, they use every power they possess to keep the young soul from tasting the fruit of that tree, even putting blinders on their children, as men do on horses, that they may not even know that the tree is there at all. The parents know the peril of exposure. It may make the child strong ; but there is ever the other unspeakably horrible alternative, which makes them shrink from the tree with terror.

And yet we are aware of the great value of this knowledge. God admitted the result of eating when He reviews the situation after pronouncing sentence upon the guilty : " Behold, the man is become as one of Us to know good and evil." There is probably no knowledge obtainable by man so akin to the knowledge of God, as this knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge is one of the richest treasures of God or man. Isaiah showed that he knew its value : " Woe unto them," he cried, " that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ! " The Prophet sees the peril in confusing moral distinctions. Yet the power of evil ever lies in its ability to make just that confusion. Very few of us will do evil as long as it seems to be evil. But how different is the success of the most cunning of all the animals when we first dull our moral sense so that we put " bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter ! " It is the old trick of the garden over again. The tactics of evil have never changed. If the serpent had said to the woman, " Yes, this is very evil, but you can't be expected to resist such a delightful sin," the Calvinists would have had a different theology. But, oh, my dear friends, how much more we tremble for the poor woman assailed by temptation in which the evil is disguised in the form of a good,

and how we may well fear the devil, not when he comes with horns and tail, but in a still small voice, which sometimes is a successful counterfeit of God's.

The contention of the serpent is always the same—that we cannot have the knowledge of good and evil without actually eating the fruit of this tree. That contention has led to many a downfall, because every soul will do just what Adam did if he believes what the serpent says. For knowledge man must have; man will have it, let the price be what it may, and I do not hesitate to say that the value of the knowledge of good and evil is so great, so indispensable even to true manhood, that it is worth while to get it even if the devil's price must be paid. But may it not be had in some other way? I say some *other*, for no one doubts that Adam got the knowledge for which he paid so great a price. Every penitent sinner knows the fullness, thank God also the bitterness, of the knowledge of sin which comes of sinning. But is it not possible to know good and evil without eating the fruit of the tree; that is, is it not possible to know sin without experience of sin?

I am sure you cannot fail to see the practical importance of this question. We know many proverbs like "the burnt child fears the fire." We know the result of a belief that the young man must sow his wild oats. We know the apprehension of the danger thought to be lurking in the mother's apron strings. But while we admit that fear of the fire is absolutely necessary, we cannot find a parent who has held the child's hand in the flame in order to inculcate the useful lesson.

The fact is that the tree is necessary to a knowledge of good and evil; but not the eating of its fruit. It is the disregard of this distinction which on the one hand draws the apron strings tight, or on the other sows such a splendid crop of wild oats that the harvest is scarcely gathered in a lifetime. The one parent protects the child from the tree, the other allows him freely to eat the

fruit. One is so conscious of the danger of falling that the tree is kept in the dark ; the other is so anxious for the knowledge that no question will be raised about price or penalty. It is possible, I think, to gain all the knowledge which grows on the tree from the tree itself, without eating of its fruit. For otherwise, God would be devoid of this knowledge, and Christ by His sinlessness would be excluded from the knowledge of sin. But we do not need to appeal to Divine examples ; we know the truth ourselves. Our instincts tell us that the highest character and the richest knowledge came from the resistance of sin, not from experience of it.

Take the blackest of all sins. Who knows best the monstrous hideousness of it ? Is it the young girl whose body and soul are alike sweet and pure in their untested innocence ? Or is it the Mary Magdalen, even though she may have found her peace in the tears with which she bathed the Saviour's feet ? Is her bitter knowledge, which gives her a shudder every time the terrible picture of her life comes to her, is that the best for the development of the soul ? No, our instincts tell us rightly. We are never so confident of the reformed, as of those who have never fallen. A true man ever feels kindly towards the woman who has risen from the pits ; but very few would care to take her to wife. There is a knowledge unto life, and a knowledge unto death ; and in such a case there is the fear that the knowledge may be a knowledge unto death ; that sin will have left its marks ; that some of the finer traits which make woman what she is, may have been destroyed beyond repair until that complete stage in regeneration when God shall make all things new.

There are a good many kinds of trees of knowledge of good and evil. With some of them we have little to do. The baneful effect of the fruit is so plain to us that we turn from the tree easily and decidedly. We do not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so

wisely. But there is a tendency, I think, to learn the lesson of the trees, like Adam, after eating. We take great pains to know all about evil which we are not likely to do, and are so woefully ignorant of the evils which are standing just outside the door, ready and able to slip in through a crack. The employee knows so much about the greed of employers ; and employers know so much about the untrustworthiness of labourers. The poor know so much about the misuse of wealth ; and the rich man can preach so well about the sin of discontent. Do we almost smile at these things ? Bring it a little closer to our doors, and the smile will disappear. How readily you and I, for example, see the political sins of our opponents, and how blind we are to our own unfulfilled political duties. How monstrous the great sin of which some culprit stands exposed seems to us with our enlightened consciences, and how tightly shut are our eyes to some traits of character which mar the symmetry of our lives. Don't be so anxious about these perilous trees which grow far away from you in the world, that you shall forget that there are some growing in your own garden.

Finally, keep the knowledge of good and evil sharp and clear. The practice of evil is not only not necessary to knowledge, but may even be destructive of knowledge. In the doing of evil, we are so likely to yield to the persuasion that it is not evil, or at least not very evil. If sin must be done, and there is no man that sinneth not, let it be done knowingly, deliberately, clearly perceived as wrong and done as wrong. But you say, is not ignorance an excuse ? Does not the law say that murder in the first degree is murder committed deliberately and intentionally ? Is not all crime adjudged worse if done knowingly ? Very true ; but there is a worse evil than this. That is, the dulling of the moral sense ; and it is easy to do many things after that sense is dulled which it would be quite impossible for us to do if our moral consciousness were clear. The crime committed by

intention may be blacker as a crime ; not because of the intention, but because of what the intention reveals. Many a person could kill another in hot blood, as we say, who could not pull the trigger knowingly and deliberately. The value of the knowledge of sin lies in its restraining influence. We are able to keep from the sin which we know even though we weakly are caught in traps we cannot see. No one knows better than the devil that " the net is spread in vain in sight of any bird." If we could only see that it is not necessary to be caught in the net to know that the net is there ; that God knows, and we may know, the terrible nature and consequences of sin without sinning ; that the knowledge of good and evil is best attained by steadily refusing to eat of the forbidden fruit.

When we have gained this knowledge, we have been carried to the first firm standing ground in the Divine uplifting which we call the Redemption of the World.

SEXAGESIMA

GLORYING IN INFIRMITIES

BY THE REVEREND HENRY V. DER H. COWELL, B.A.

2 CORINTHIANS xi. 30.

“ If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”

THESE are very remarkable words. Let us consider the circumstances in which they were penned that we may the better understand them.

The passage in which they stand is a bold and vigorous vindication on the part of the Apostle, of his authority which had been assailed in a very virulent way by some new teacher who had come down from Jerusalem professing to have a higher sanction and to preach a truer Gospel than St. Paul.

This man claimed for himself superiority by virtue of greater purity of descent, by reason of immediate connexion with Christ, by right of letters of commendation from the chief Christian Church.

Not content with asserting such superiority, he disparaged St. Paul in the most unscrupulous manner. He even descended to personalities, taunting him with having a mean and repellent appearance. His letters were bold enough, he allowed, but he insinuated that this was “mere sound and fury signifying nothing,” for his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. Even the courage of the Apostle was questioned by him. He had talked of visiting Corinth, but this calumniator

would have it believed that he would not prove bold enough to face him.

Such was the animus of the antagonist whom St. Paul had to confront. And it is this animus which explains the keen irony, the strong invective, the righteous indignation with which St. Paul hurls back his charges and reasserts his authority. Such were the calumnies which he was called to meet, and my brief summary of these may serve to make intelligible the somewhat obscure allusions in the Epistle for this day.

This false teacher had boasted great things of himself, and had tried to blast the reputation of St. Paul. Therefore the Apostle says, in the tenth chapter, eighth verse, that if it became a matter of self-assertion, he could meet and fight him with his own weapons: "For though I should boast somewhat more of our power which the Lord gave for your edification and not for casting you down, I shall not be ashamed." Such boasting, however, was very repugnant to him. Three times he begins it and breaks off again. But his antagonist compels him to it. He says therefore in effect: "You have been taught to look upon me as a fool. Let me indulge then a little in the folly of boasting in which my enemies are so expert. They are very loud in their pretensions, but if it comes to this, I am a match for them. Do they claim a strictly Jewish extraction? So do I. Do they vaunt themselves of their connexion with Christ and their credentials from the Mother-Church? Then I appeal to my life which I have again and again jeopardized for my Lord in proof of my being inspired by Him and devoted to Him! Do they twit me with my infirmities? Then they bring me to a boast of which I am not ashamed, for these infirmities are the marks of the Lord Jesus on me, the result of fidelity to Him, the evidences of His grace triumphing in me." Such is the tenor of the passage from which my text is taken.

And now let us consider the text itself.

In doing so, we will first notice the nature of the infirmities in which St. Paul gloried, and will then turn to the reasons why he gloried in them. First, then, as to the nature of the infirmities in which St. Paul gloried.

These infirmities were partly constitutional and partly the result of circumstances: they arose from physical weakness aggravated by the dangers and difficulties which the Apostle had encountered.

The seat of them was some bodily disease—that thorn, or stake, in the flesh, of which he speaks in the following verses.

There has been great debate as to the nature of this malady. But I need not take up your time with discussing the point. Suffice it to say that the most probable suggestions respecting it are, that it was either intense nervous irritability or acute disease of the eyes, and that I think the evidence in support of the latter supposition the stronger. For the Apostle tells the Galatians that their enthusiasm for him had been such that they would have dug out their eyes to place them at his service, and he closes his Epistle with the remark, “Ye see in what large letters I write to you with mine own hand,” which favours the hypothesis that he found it difficult to write at all. Ophthalmia is a very common complaint under the fierce glare of Eastern skies, and it frequently disfigures very sadly the human face; and affecting the brain, causes keen pain, which necessarily enfeebles the whole nature. St. Paul probably contracted this malady on the road to Damascus, when he was “blinded with excess of light.” But his sufferings had been greatly aggravated by his labours, and his perils by land and by sea, in his service of the Master, and they had been further intensified by anxiety on account of the congregations planted by him and by that sensitive sympathy with the members of the Churches of Christ; which he expresses in the words, “Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?”

These were the infirmities with which his enemies reproached him : this was the weakness in which, he declared, if he must needs boast, he would vaunt.

Now, there are probably many here who are sufferers from infirmities. Some, it may be, have been less gifted with graces of person than other members of their family, some have impaired sight or bodily privation ; some have enfeebled their constitution by the assiduity with which they have applied themselves to their calling in life, from a conscientious desire to provide for their own ; some perhaps, in closer analogy with the case of the Apostle, have overtaxed their strength in the service of the Saviour Whom they love so well.

To all such I commend for careful consideration the language before us.

Human nature is not apt to pride itself on its infirmities. It is too prone, on the contrary, to murmur at them and to be made peevish by them. Sometimes, as in the case of Lord Byron, the whole life is embittered by some physical defect. At others, when the soul has learnt to school itself into a wise submissiveness, this is all it can do. It feels its sufferings to be a dark, insoluble mystery for the explanation of which it must wait for the higher disclosures of the future. Few rise so high in faith and look upon their infirmities from so elevated a point as to be able to glory in them. Few regard them as some of the truest blessings which a wise God has sent them in the orderings of His providence. But this is what St. Paul did.

And, now, let us see what considerations brought him to this state of mind.

First, then, it would appear that he had learnt to regard his infirmities as telling to his advantage, because they had counteracted the uprising of pride in his heart and had helped to develop in him the important grace of humility.

“ Lest I should be exalted above measure through the

abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

There is a little plant called the shore-weed—from the fact of its flourishing in the shallows of the lake-side—which has this peculiarity, that it bursts into flower only when the water flows away from it in the driest summers. While under water, its roots spread so fast that the plant has no strength to spare upon blossom, but, when it is left dry, then, the growth of the roots being checked, it develops flower instead. In like manner, the soul puts forth the flowers of humility, for the most part, only when prosperity, or high advantage, or rude health, ebb away, and the spreading fibres of self-congratulation are checked within. Hence the happy influence of infirmities. They nip the spreading of self-approval within the heart and cause it to put forth the modest but lovely grace, humility. St. Paul felt the beneficial effect of his weakness in working this result, and came to account his loss a gain. May we, profiting in like manner, have the same reason for glorying in our infirmities.

But, further, St. Paul had come to regard his weakness as beneficial because he had been taught thereby trustful reliance on God, and so "out of weakness had been made strong" in His exceeding strength.

He tells us that there had gone up from him three times an appeal to be relieved from his prostration; but that instead of deliverance he had received an assurance that Divine strength is perfected in human weakness, and that, his experience verifying this assurance, he had learnt to acquiesce in his infirmity: "for," he says, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

And, my friends, this experience of St. Paul's is shared by God's servants in all ages.

It is ever found that the human heart is apt to live too independently of God, to trust too much to its own resources, until it is taught by some enfeebling stroke its

own insufficiency and is impelled by stress of outer trial or by sense of inner feebleness to cling to Omnipotent strength.

"It is the dark side of life," as Dr. Vaughan says, "which brings us most closely, most consciously, into connexion with the supporting and comforting help of Christ within. Everything that lowers the exuberance of animal spirits, everything that tends to depress and humble us as merely human and earthly beings tends also, if it be but meekly and faithfully borne, to show in us and to us how near Christ is, how loving, how real, how powerful."

Well may we therefore be thankful for our infirmities since they make the power of Christ to be ours more abundantly.

And then, arising out of this fact, comes a further reason for "glorying in infirmities" realized by the Apostle: namely this, that they served as a foil to exhibit and magnify Divine grace.

If St. Paul had been a person of more commanding presence and of more winning eloquence, the success achieved by him might have been attributed to natural causes; but since his person was feeble and his words came with little fluency and force in his spoken addresses, what he accomplished in gaining converts and establishing Churches proved that his message met men's needs, commended itself to men's consciousness, and was carried home with the demonstration of the Spirit to their souls. Thus his weakness manifested the power of the truth which he taught and gave proof that God was working with him. So men learnt in consequence of his weakness that he was only an agent in God's hands and were taught to give God the glory of all that was done through him.

And, for this reason, God has ever been wont to put His heavenly treasure in feeble earthen vessels that, as St. Paul says in this very Epistle, "the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."

It is said that in the Middle Ages, on one occasion, Fra Masseo, a handsome, burly, and somewhat self-satisfied friar, meeting the gaunt, worn, pitiable figure of St. Francis as he came forth from a wood to which he was wont to retire for fellowship with his God, cried in surprise, "Why to thee?" And being asked by the saint for an explanation expanded the question thus: "Why should all the world run after thee and everyone desire to see and hear and obey thee? Thou art not handsome; thou art not noble; thou art not learned; then why to thee? Why does all the world run after thee?"

We know why to him was given this power. It was because his very lack of natural gifts led him to live near to God and made him a fitting medium for the manifestation of Divine grace.

A holy life has well been called "visible rhetoric," and such rhetoric is far more persuasive than eloquence of speech. And by whom is such "visible rhetoric" exhibited? By the gifted, the strong, the fascinating, the wealthy? Sometimes. But more often by the weakly, the tried, the sorrowful, the unfortunate; by the poor invalid in whom is seen a beautiful uncomplaining submissiveness to God's Will; by the man of feeble frame who in spite of frequent ailments and sickly constitution stands steadfast at his post of duty; by the man who, deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, seeks a sufficiency in God.

These furnish forth evidences of the Faith more convincing than massive treatises of learned argument; these bear witness for Christ with an impressiveness more persuasive than the tongue of the most gifted orator. St. Paul, feeling that the power of Divine grace was thus magnified in him, took pleasure "in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." And shall not we, also, acquiesce in those privations and pains, those trials and weaknesses which serve to wean from the world, to refine

our souls, to purge us of self-seeking, to render us subservient to God's purposes, and so to enable us to glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His? God help us to do so, God teach us so to profit by our infirmities as to enable us to glory in our very frailties and necessities, because they draw us to Him in humbleness of heart, make us strong in His strength, fit us for His service, and lead men to magnify Him in us, as in His Apostle of old.

QUINQUAGESIMA

DIVINE LOVE

BY THE REVEREND NOEL A. BONAVIA-HUNT, M.A.

I CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.”

THESE words have a familiar sound in your ears, but they are not what St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian converts. And when I say this, I am not attacking the Bible or suggesting that this particular verse is not genuine. The Authorized Version was on the whole a wonderfully accurate translation of the sacred writings into our English tongue, but in common with most things in this world it cannot claim to be perfect, and here and there we find a mis-translation of the original Hebrew or Greek, as the case may be, by which the real meaning is obscured. Our text affords a good instance, and even the Revised Version fails to put it right. Indeed, I have never seen the correct rendering pointed out in any commentary or treatise dealing with this chapter, although it is hard to believe that it has escaped the eagle eye of the modern linguist.

If we turn to the Greek Testament, we find that St. Paul actually wrote these words, a literal translation of which I now give you—“And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three things; but greater than these is the Love.” Note two points of difference between the old and new renderings: first, the substitution of the word

“greater” for “greatest”—the comparative for the superlative—and, secondly, the two kinds of *love* referred to, the one called “love” and the other called “the Love,” the one with and the other without the distinguishing article. See what a wonderful difference this correct translation makes! Instead of regarding love as the greatest of the three graces, faith, hope and love, we are asked by the Apostle to turn our eyes toward a *fourth* grace, *pre-eminent above the other three*, which he calls “the Love,” something far, far greater and nobler than the other “love” bracketed with faith and hope in the former part of the sentence. We could perhaps best express in modern English the two kinds of love mentioned in this verse by spelling the first with a small “l” and the second with a capital “L,” since it is not good grammar to speak of “the love” though it is excellent Greek. But the great point to notice is that one is human while the other is Divine. St. Paul tells us that we have still with us on this earth the three great *human* virtues of faith, hope and love, which are essential to man during his earthly sojourn if he is to reach up to heavenly things and seek his true home. But Love, in its fullest, completest and divinest sense, is the most essential of all the attributes of God, and is the goal and summit to which all men and women must attain if they would be like God in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle, who expounded the philosophy of Christianity as none else, realizes that he can only describe this heavenly Love by compiling a list of graces and qualities all of which exist together in the person of him who is the true Christian gentleman. “She suffereth long and is kind” is the description of the virtue of *patience*: “she envieth not”—here we have *magnanimity*: “vaunteth not herself”—this is *humility*: “doth not behave itself unseemly” is the conduct of a *courteous* and *dignified* gentleman: “she seeketh not her own”—*unselfishness* and *contentment*: “is not easily provoked”—*good*

temper: "thinketh no evil"—*innocence* of heart: "rejoiceth in the truth"—love of *reality*: "beareth all things"—*endurance* and *fortitude*: "believeth all things"—*faith* and *childlike trust*: "hopeth all things"—*cheerfulness* and *optimism*. Eleven beautiful qualities we here have brought before us, each one separately to be cultivated and perfected: yet, if but *one* be missing, if but one be neglected, if but one be imperfectly represented in your character or mine, the Fruit of Divine Love cannot be produced in us in all its loveliness.

I repeat that these are the attributes of a Christian gentleman. It is quite possible to educate a child in the ways and manners of the "gentleman" without teaching him the Christian religion. He may quite conceivably grow up into that model product of modern civilization, who never forgets himself, whose address is perfect, whose dignity is never ruffled, whose passions are always under control, who can successfully conceal "the inward cursing of his heart" before those of his acquaintances whom he is wishing far away! But this is the character of a hypocrite, a consummate actor: the true gentleman, the Christian gentleman, *is* what he seems to be; at the root of his nature lies Christian Love, the unfathomable source from whence springs the pure water of friendship and brotherliness. His chief anxiety is lest by any means, by some chance word or act or expression, he hurt the feelings of a brother, lest he fail in some weak moment to anticipate his brother's need. Read once more the description of Love given in this 13th chapter and imagine that it exists in one of your own acquaintance—would you not be proud to acknowledge the friendship and love of such a person?

St. Paul next proceeds to show the superiority of Divine Love by comparing it with certain great and much sought after earthly gifts. He makes it quite clear that Love is the only permanent and lasting possession. All else passes away when it has served its purpose.

Prophecy, for instance, was a gift much admired in his day. It was the power of expounding Scripture. But who can say that it is intended for all time, that the day will not come when "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest"? Then the interpreter of Scripture, with all his eloquence and critical gifts, will no longer be required. And we are warned that "tongues shall fail," and that "knowledge shall vanish away." *Languages* become obsolete and are but temporary expedients, therefore the linguist may only exercise his gift for a time. And it is even so in the world of *knowledge* and *science*. In the present disordered state of the universe, as we know it, disease and pain are rampant, but surely we may look forward to the blessed era when these things shall be done away. Then what need will there be for medical science or the profession of the doctor and surgeon? What need for the gift of healing, when the time comes in which "they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more"? What need for the lawyer and the criminologist, when Love prevails and no wrongs or injuries are committed, no thefts, no murders, no outrages, no frauds? When Christ reigns on the earth, the judge, the barrister, the "law," will vanish. Do we not know how advancing scientific knowledge is ever repudiating its latest theories and discrediting its pet exponents? We realize that, after all (yes! even we whose scientific privileges are apt to make us look down with contempt upon the days of our great-grandfathers), we know so little, and that our boasted discoveries may not suffice the schoolboy of the future. And the older and wiser brethren among us should have learned the truth that no knowledge and no science is of any worth save the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the science of the Holy Spirit!

Love reigns supreme. All the other things are subservient. All are means to the great end. Love is the completion and perfection of man. Love is the ripe

fruit that never decays. We cultivate the tree in order to obtain the fruit : so, too, the Apostle urges the Corinthians to cultivate the best gifts that these may lead them to the fruit of Love. He shows them that all human life is meant to be progressive and that we must not be content to stop too long at any station on the route to Heaven. "When I was a child, I spake . . . I understood . . . I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Exactly. There is a difference—a world of difference—between childhood and manhood. Each state is beautiful while it lasts and during its *natural* period or stage, but each is only at best a means to the end, a process of human development to greater things. A little knowledge of human nature will prove to us the truth of this. The first years of our life are simply animal, our actions are dictated by mere instinct, by the appetites and lusts, by a craving for the satisfaction of the animal senses. This passes through adolescence and early manhood into something more than mere instinct : strong feelings and mighty impulses ; ardent love and burning hate—the working off of the superfluous energy of human passions. We see this especially in the case of the young man and the young woman who have been allowed their freedom in colleges and universities. And so long as it is only a transitory phase through which they are passing, a stage in the evolution of sterling character, there is no call for anxiety : it is when the passions *continue* to rule, when the ignorance and pigheadedness of youth that fancies itself knowledge, the selfishness that ignores the claims of others, persists through life into old age, that the awful tragedy takes place. For just as we are to grow out of the childhood state of animal indulgence—the "carnal" type—into the manhood state of mighty feelings and aspirations—the "natural" man—so we are to grow out of the manhood state into the Christlike state—the "spiritual" man, in whom the passions are so ruled that

they have become holiness, meekness and love, when the animal instincts are only retained for the support of life and are completely subordinated to the spirit. Nor must any of these distinct phases be permitted to rest in a transitional condition, as for instance when a man has begun to realize that selfishness does not pay, and that if society is to exist at all each individual member must be prepared to make certain sacrifices for the common weal ; yet still he will not make the plunge and give up all for Christ.

Love is the be-all and end-all of our existence. " If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us," says St. John. " And above all things have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins," says St. Peter. St. John, St. Peter, St. Paul are unanimous on this subject, though each would have approached it from his own individual point of view. Love is the magic word that opens the book of Life and unlocks the secrets of Heaven's Kingdom. " Now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then, face to face. Now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

In this earthly existence we cannot do without Faith, for Faith is the faculty by which alone we may see God and the spiritual world. It is the " eye " of the spirit, just as the five senses enable the body to perceive material things, and the reason enables the mind to generalize on these phenomena. While man is living in the present physical world, faith is indeed a necessity to convince him of the reality of his Heavenly Father's love : but when the time comes that " we shall see Him as He is," faith will " vanish into sight " : the clouded glass will be removed and make way for the perfect vision of the King in His beauty.

Hope, too, is but a temporary necessity. Without it we should pine away through *ennui* and weariness of heart. But with hope in our breasts it is wonderful how

long and patiently we will stagger on to our goal. Yet with the fulfilment of our desires hope has gone, and if Love has taken its place there is joy for evermore. Lastly, we value human love above all, for it is the ladder by which we ascend to the divine. For "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?" God is not jealous of our human love : we must begin with personal attachments—even as Our Lord had a strong human affection for St. John—before we can rise to the Alpine purity of God's own Love. So also there is a human standard of unselfishness and considerateness for others, exercised more especially towards those whom we understand and with whose opinions we agree. Without this, as I have already explained, society could not exist and the world would be uninhabitable. But to love our enemies, to tolerate intolerance, to waive one's rights rather than cause the weaker brother to offend—this is Divine Love. Faith is the stem, Hope the leaf, human love the blossom : all three are essential to the development of the tree of Life. But greater than these is Love, the crowning fruit, of which, he that eateth shall never hunger, for Love is the Life of God, and Love is the only true life of man.

ASH WEDNESDAY

THE OBJECT OF LENT

BY THE REVEREND FREDERICK ARTHUR CLARKE, M.A.

ST. MARK ii. 17.

“ They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.”

ASH WEDNESDAY is a day which, I suppose, we most of us shrink from—that is, if we take any notice of it at all. And it is natural that we should shrink from it and even dislike it. It is a day of humiliation, of sadness, and gloom ; and it is not natural for us to like any of these things.

Good Friday is different. That is a day of even deeper sorrow, of yet more awful darkness ; yet on Good Friday as we kneel before the Cross of Christ we may to some extent forget ourselves in the sufferings and the anguish of Our Saviour—in the wondrous mystery of the death of the God-Man. We may think—we must—of the marvellous *love* of God ; the gloom is lighted up by the glow and splendour of that love ; and our hearts, in all their sorrow, cannot shut out the blessed influence of hope and peace, of thankfulness for our great deliverance.

But to-day our thoughts must be turned chiefly on ourselves—on the state of our own hearts, on our helplessness and sin ; and here—if we are honest with ourselves—we shall find little or nothing to relieve the gloom. Here all is dark. If we are honest with ourselves, we shall have to confess “ there is no health in us.” “ In

me"—that is, in my flesh, in my own natural self—"dwelleth no good thing." That is a painful thought; it is one the natural heart would be glad to escape from, if it could.

Yet the thought of Ash Wednesday, though painful, may be most useful and valuable; the duties of Ash Wednesday and Lent, though irksome, may be quite necessary to the well-being of our souls. The medicine that is most disagreeable to take may be exactly what will do us the most good.

Hear the words of Our Saviour: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." Of course Our Lord does not mean that there are any who have no need of Him. We all need Him; the best of us cannot do without Him. He uses this proverb to explain how it was that the publicans and sinners, the outcast and miserable, came to Him and heard Him gladly, while the Scribes and Pharisees held aloof. "They that are whole need not the physician"; the Pharisees thought themselves whole and sound—they thought all was well with them, and so they felt no need of the help of the Great Physician of souls; they kept away from Him. Happy would it have been for them if they could have seen themselves as He saw them, and known themselves poor and sick and miserable, and felt their need of healing, even as the people they despised felt their need.

And happy will it be for us if we can be brought by any means to a deeper sense of our sinfulness and helplessness, of our dependence upon Christ. This is the object of Lent; this is at least one object of all the exercises and kinds of discipline which are prescribed for us in Lent. It is to make us feel our need of the Great Physician, our need of the glorious deliverance that was wrought for us upon the Cross.

It is obvious that this is the object of the duty of self-examination. To some self-examination seems unnecessary; they suppose that they already know all about

themselves and their own conduct. But it is not really so. There are within us many secret desires, there are unacknowledged motives for many of our deeds, of which we ourselves know nothing, unless we take trouble to search them out. And even the actual sins of which we are perfectly conscious—even these it is necessary for us to bring before ourselves again in self-examination. It is necessary for us to count them—to realize their number; otherwise we shall not really feel how great is our need of repentance and pardon.

And again, it is surely most useful for us to think over alone each evening the misdeeds of the day. At the time when we did them, we did not perceive the full guilt of them; we did them in carelessness or hot blood, and thus their sinfulness was hidden from our view; or the temptation to which we gave way seemed to us an excuse. They will look very different when we reflect on them on our knees, in the silence and solitude of our chambers. Then we shall see them more as God sees them; then we shall feel how great is our danger as long as they are unconfessed and unforgiven.

And then, again, the very effort to live more strictly, more according to the rule of God's commandments, will help us to feel how great is our need of God's grace and mercy. Those who live in careless sin are not the people who feel this need most deeply. Often we are not conscious that we have failed simply because we have made no real effort. To have made an honest attempt to serve God is always to have gained something; but those who have made such an attempt will feel their failure far more than those who have been lazily content to slip down the stream. And it is the fact that the greater progress we have made in obedience and holiness, the more we feel how grievously we have fallen short of the duty we owe to God.

So, too, with the self-denial and fasting we ought to practise during Lent. That is partly intended to make

us understand that we are sick and need the Physician of our souls. We all *are* suffering from the disease of sin ; only, alas ! it is possible for us to hide the truth from ourselves, to be ignorant of our real state. It is easy—it is common for sinful souls to help themselves to forget their danger by distractions and excitements, the pleasures and amusements of the world. While the soul is occupied with these things it forgets its misery and peril ; and therefore it is well for us for a time to deny ourselves even lawful pleasures and indulgences, to withdraw ourselves as much as possible from the world and its amusements, to give ourselves leisure and quiet to be still and listen to the voice of God which sounds in the stillness.

That ought to be our great occupation during Lent, to listen to God's voice. By more diligent reading of His Holy Word, by meditation, by longer and more frequent and earnest communion with Him in prayer and in His Blessed Sacrament, we may come to know Him better, to see His Will more clearly, and in the light of that knowledge to see and understand our own sad state.

That, then, is part at least of the task we ought to set before ourselves in Lent—to realize our sickness, our misery and danger ; to feel “ the spirit's sore, sore need ” of God's mercy. It is not a task we can take pleasure in. Even if our hope of recovery is assured, still sickness is an affliction, pain is painful and hard to bear. Even though we may have a good hope that God's loving correction will make us great, still “ no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.” Even if our confidence is fixed and firm in God's mercy, still the sense of sin—I might say all the more the sense of sin—is humbling and painful.

Yet, though the thought of God's mercy ought not to prevent us from feeling the shame and suffering of sin, it will and ought to save us from despair. To go from carelessness to despair is only to cure one disease by

another—perhaps a worse one. In all our affliction—and not least in our affliction for sin—let us look up to Heaven for comfort. There is no health in us ; we are filled with a sore disease : but this sickness is not unto death ; if we trust in God, He will make it a means of manifesting His goodness and mercy. If we feel our misery, we may be confident that it will be removed. It is the sick who need the Great Physician ; and our need is itself a pledge that He will not fail us. His wounds will be our healing, and His death our life.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM

BY THE REVEREND WALTER HOBHOUSE, D.D.

ST. LUKE VII. 33, 34.

"John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine," etc.

BOTH in St. Luke's Gospel and in St. Matthew's the forcible contrast which Our Lord here draws between Himself and St. John the Baptist is preceded by the somewhat obscure parable, or comparison, of the children sitting in the market-place. According to what seems to be the most probable interpretation, the children who are represented as sitting in the market-place, and finding fault with their fellows, are the Jews, or rather their religious leaders the Pharisees. John, in his severity, comes to them and they want him to play at festivities and rejoicings. When he refuses to abandon his ascetic life, they complain and say, "We piped to you, and you did not dance." Christ comes to them with joy and cheerfulness, and they ask Him to play at mourning and funerals, and when He will not change His methods, they cry out, "We mourned to you and you did not weep." In any case it is certain that Our Lord is here drawing a pointed contrast between His own method and that of St. John, and that He represents the religious leaders of the day as disapproving of both. It may not be amiss to look a little more closely into the nature of the methods which He contrasts and

to see what is the sum of Our Lord's teaching and the general outcome of his example with regard to the use and value of asceticism.

In what sense, if any, was Our Blessed Lord Himself an ascetic? It is difficult for anyone to read the Gospels thoughtfully without asking some such question, if not in those precise words. There seems to be so much conflicting evidence. It would not be hard to put together a whole set of facts, a whole series of injunctions, which point to self-denial, self-repression, humiliation, austerity as the marks of the life which Jesus Christ chose for Himself and held up as the ideal for His disciples. He deigned to be born into the world in a lowly position: He was known as "the carpenter's son"; He lived a life of comparative poverty: He underwent persecution; He had not where to lay His head; He humbled Himself to the most painful and shameful of deaths. And, as it was with His example, so is it also with many of His precepts. He warns those who would be His disciples that their lot will not be an easy one. They must take up their cross and follow Him; they must be prepared to "hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters—yea, and their own lives also"; if hand or foot offend, they must cut it off and cast it from them. The young ruler, who asked for advice, was bidden to sell all he possessed and give it to the poor; the rich are warned that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

There is in such passages as these, and in others which might be quoted, something like a *prima facie* case for the identification of Our Lord's teaching with the extreme doctrines of renunciation that became so common in the third century of our era, when monks and hermits cut themselves off completely from the world and overcame it by removing themselves from all contact with it. And it has been made an accusation against Christ and

Christianity, from quite early times until the present day, that Christianity is in its essence ascetic and anti-social : that if it were carried out as Christ intended it to be, it would involve the severance of the ties which bind a man to family and to country—the repression not only of dangerous passions but of natural affections—the renunciation of all that is beautiful in human life.

But then, in contrast to the side of things which is presented to us in such passages, we have what seems to be another strain of teaching, examples pointing in the opposite direction. The first miracle that Our Lord performed was at the wedding feast at Cana. He was a guest at the banquets of rich men ; He accepted the gift of precious ointment which might have been sold and given to the poor ; He did not live in solitude, but sought human companionships ; He did not strictly enjoin fasting upon His disciples, and in the passage from which our text is taken He explicitly contrasts Himself with John the Baptist. How, it may well be asked, are we to reconcile such contrary tendencies, such divergent representations ? What was, in reality, the mind of Christ ?

The question is not one of merely speculative interest. There are many who are in real perplexity as to what God's Will for them is in this matter. There are many who have an uncomfortable feeling that they may not have put before themselves a high enough standard in the way of self-denial, and yet hardly see how to adopt a different one without severing themselves completely from the world. At times, perhaps, they feel that this is what Christ would have them do ; at other times their thoughts return to such a passage as our text, and the idea of abandoning the ties of human relationship or of deliberately making themselves insensible to innocent pleasures seems to them strained and morbid. In this way conscience is wounded, and religious zeal is dimmed by the sense of incompleteness and inconsistency. There is a halting between two opinions, and this double-mindedness

produces, as it always must, a miserable instability, a fatal unprogressiveness.

Now we must always beware of making the Word of God of none effect by our tradition ; we must be on our guard against the temptation to explain away any injunctions which it is uncomfortable for us to carry out in their fullness. Yet, at the same time, it is plain that there are many passages in the Gospels which it is impossible to interpret literally. It is plain that Christ gave no code, no system of rigid precepts, but deliberately chose another method of teaching—by parables, by proverbs, by brief and pregnant sayings, which were uttered apparently without the addition of any qualification or reserve. They were meant to warn, to stimulate, to awaken ; and we are left to balance and to harmonize them as best we can. It may not be the way in which we should have expected a priori that religious teaching would be given ; but it is undoubtedly the way in which Christ chose to give it. And so when we take a subject like asceticism and ask what He taught about it, we have to sift and to compare and to see what principles we can find emerging from the Gospel record.

We shall find first of all, I think, that Our Lord never sanctions the idea that our bodies or the material world in which we live are in themselves evil. That has been a common idea among ascetics especially in the East. It was entertained, probably, by a Jewish Sect, the Essenes, in Our Lord's time ; it seems that they condemned all gratification of natural cravings, and sought to disengage themselves as far as possible from the conditions of physical life, believing matter to be the principle of evil. We look in vain in Our Lord's teaching for any declaration of principles such as these. He never taught the malignity of matter, or enjoined abstinence from marriage, or spoke of the body as in itself evil.

Again, it is plain that if Christ differed from the Essene He differed also from the Pharisee. The fasting of the

Pharisee was formal, external, ceremonial. It was based not so much on a general desire to gain the power of self-restraint as upon obedience to a rigid code of ceremonial precepts, which had to be literally observed in order to avoid defilement or guilt. Our Lord forbade His disciples to make any outward parade of fasting, and the whole spirit of His teaching ran counter to the literal observance of ceremonial rules apart from sympathy with their inner meaning. Yet we know that, on occasion, He fasted Himself ; we know that He spoke of it as the natural thing for His disciples to do when He was taken from them ; and we see with what praise He speaks of John the Baptist on more than one occasion, although He contrasts John's method with His own. Our Lord, in fact, seems to have regarded fasting, not as an end in itself but as a means to an end ; He valued it not simply as so much mortification undergone, but as a way of attaining self-discipline or a natural means of expressing the feelings of the heart. When we view it in this light we can see that asceticism may appeal with very different force to different men, according to the times in which they live and the tasks which are set them to fulfil. For the preaching of repentance which fell to the great Forerunner of Christ, the solitary life, the camel's hair raiment, the diet of locusts and wild honey were best suited : Jesus Christ Himself judged it better to come "eating and drinking"—not indeed to live a life of ease, but to mingle more freely in the social life of those whom He wished to draw to Him.

When His presence was withdrawn from earth, dark days of persecution followed for His Church. He had brought, "not peace but a sword," and it was only through a period of storm and stress that the message of the Gospel could be spread throughout the world. It was a time when father was divided from son, and mother from daughter, and a man's foes were they of his own household, a time which specially called for men who had

disciplined themselves to face any sacrifice, and to break off any ties.

Once more, the discipline and the self-denial which are requisite are to be exercised in the world and not out of the world. Our Lord's prayer for His disciples was "not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil." In the days of the hermits that prayer was forgotten, and men withdrew to deserts and caves to cut themselves off wholly from the world, if perchance through ceaseless prayer and lifelong mortification they might violently take the Kingdom of Heaven by force. It is always easier to cut a knot than to untie it, and the hermit's method was a cutting of the knot. He severed himself from the world at one blow, instead of gradually disentangling his soul from what was evil, and letting it strike root in all that was good. And this spirit has been found not only in the solitary life of the anchorite, but often also in the community-life of monk or nun, though in a lesser degree. At its best, monasticism has been submission to discipline and austerity in order to forge a fitting instrument for the salvation of others: at its worst, it has been a more or less selfish attempt on the part of men to secure their own salvation under the easiest conditions, with but little care for what happened to the world at large.

It is easy to see that there were in Our Lord's time, and that there have been since His time, certain types of asceticism which a candid examination of His teaching does not favour. But it would be folly to pretend that the pressing danger of the present day lies in this direction. If a perverted asceticism may still be a temptation to a few, unbridled luxury and indulgence in pleasure is the temptation of the many. Never was there an age when so many professing Christians were so much entangled in the meshes of material wants and enjoyments, to the infinite detriment of their souls' health. If Christ were to appear on earth again now, His strongest denunciations,

one might expect, would be directed against the perils of luxury and the evils of self-indulgence, rather than against the abuse of self-restraint. Let us therefore look especially in the direction where our danger lies. If we find that the body is ever encroaching upon the spirit, let us not be ashamed to resist those encroachments by definite rules of abstinence which may restore the control that is the spirit's proper prerogative. All things may, in themselves, be lawful for us, but all things are not expedient, and it is for us to see that we are not brought under the power of any. If we can see clearly the falsehood of extreme asceticism, do not let us on that account be impatient of any wholesome means of discipline which may keep our bodies in subjection and make us more perfect instruments for the work which is given us to do. May it not be ours to find that in eagerly grasping at the whole world we have lost our own souls.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

JACOB AND NATHANAEL

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM F. PELTON, M.A.

ST. JOHN i. 51.

“ Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

THE supposition has been made that St. John wrote his Gospel in order to supplement the Synoptics ; but the truth probably is that he has done so unintentionally. He sketches some characters, it is true—Nathanael, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, and others—which are not noticed by the other Evangelists ; but his immediate object is to show forth the glory of the Son of God on earth ; and how could he do this better than by giving specific instances of the truth stated at the beginning of his Gospel, “ as many as received Him (the true Light) to them gave He power to become the sons of God ” ? Nathanael has been identified with one of the Apostles, Bartholomew ; but this is pure conjecture, and it would be more in accordance with St. John’s purpose if we were to assume that Nathanael did *not* belong to the chosen twelve.

When we read this brief story we are irresistibly reminded of a character in the Old Testament, viz., Jacob—reminded in two ways, by resemblance and by contrast. Jacob, or Israel, was the Supplanter, the man of guile ; Nathanael was the “ Israelite without guile.” Jacob actually saw a vision of exactly the same kind as that

promised to Nathanael. Both gave utterance to an exclamation which had the same meaning, showing that each of them realized the Divine Presence. Jacob exclaimed, "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not"; and Nathanael's words are "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel!" But whereas Jacob's wonder was not aroused until *after* he had seen the vision, Nathanael was astonished at something which occurred previously while the vision was yet in the future. The vision and the confession occurred then in reverse order: in one case the realization of the Divine Presence was the goal to which the vision led, in the other it was the starting-point, leading up to a vision, which is only predicted and never actually recorded.

Let us turn our attention to Jacob first. His character was, to begin with, of a very mixed and dubious nature. As the son of godly parents, no doubt he was brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. No doubt the Lord's words concerning Abraham, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment," were equally true of Isaac; yet, for all that, Jacob possessed only crude ideas of the nature of God, and consequently wandered far from this way to do justice and judgment. On the one hand he greatly desired the family birthright and blessing; but on the other hand he could not trust God to give it him. He deceived his credulous father, and twice took a mean advantage of his less spiritual-minded brother. Surely we may safely infer that he intended to deceive God as well; and that this was the real cause of his being sent away as an exile from home. For what indeed was God's purpose if not for Jacob to know Him better, as he could never have done by remaining at home, tainted, as it was, with abiding memories of extortion and deceit. Just as when Adam and Eve had sinned it became necessary for their salvation to expel them from their old haunts, so did Jacob's

salvation necessitate the same treatment. The process was begun at once; and on the very first night of his exile he was vouchsafed a vision. What was the meaning of it?—The assurance, according to one view, that God's protection and favour would not be confined to the land of promise, but would be continued in the distant unknown land whither Jacob was travelling. But a better view of the vision would be that it constituted a new revelation to Jacob of the Lord as a God with Whom the exile might have personal communion. The vision, it should be noticed, was of strictly elementary kind, adapted to the needs of a beginner in spiritual life, who could only as yet realize the presence of God at an unapproachable distance; and intercourse seemed possible only by means of Angels.

Moreover, the blessing given was of an entirely material nature, referring exclusively to the good things of this life, although at the same time, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is at pains to point out, it required the exercise of faith to appropriate it. Jacob, at any rate, was equal to the occasion; his guile, though a serious obstacle at first, was not so deeply ingrained that he could not ultimately take God at His word. He began, it is true, by proposing a bargain: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God"; but eventually in the solitude and suspense of Peniel he dropped the bargain, shook off guile, and received the new nature indicated by his surname, Israel.

Now the case of Nathanael is very similar, chiefly for the reason that it is fundamentally different. Jacob's education started almost from scratch, and progressed up to a certain point; Nathanael's began after the lapse of many centuries exactly where Jacob's left off, and was continued far beyond. Nathanael began his career as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Hence there

was no obstacle to his realizing the Divine Presence. As soon as ever he was furnished with sufficient evidence—"Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee," were the words of Jesus that impressed him so strongly—he was convinced, and made confession, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God : Thou art the King of Israel."

But, for all that, Our Lord did not apparently estimate his confession at any very high value. He promised a reward certainly ; but the reward should consist of "*greater* things than these." These lesser things—i.e., the power to read Nathanael's thoughts at a distance—must be regarded as limiting the significance and value of his confession, a fact which should be obvious by comparing the words addressed to him with those full of enthusiastic appreciation which greeted Peter's similar confession at a later day, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven." Moreover, Peter's reward was of the highest possible official nature, nothing less than the Headship of Christ's Church on earth ; that promise to Nathanael was by comparison merely of a private nature, an enlargement of personal experience. Yet must it not be disparaged, being, as it is, an immense advance on those material things of which the Lord spoke to Jacob as He stood above the ladder at Bethel.

How is this shown by the vision which the future contained for Nathanael ?—By means of the significant words, "the Son of Man" on Whom Angels should descend. This phrase has two meanings : it is first a title of the Son of God during His earthly career when He dwelt here in weakness and humility, as described by St. Paul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus : Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being formed in fashion as a

man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross."

Twice do we read of Angels sent as ministers to strengthen and console Him when passing through a trying ordeal ; at one time when He had been tempted of the devil in the wilderness, at another when He had endured the agony in Gethsemane. On neither occasion was there any word spoken concerning possession of the land whereon He trod, or of seed as the dust of the earth for multitude. Yet we know well that both should be His ; but they are omitted from the records in order to emphasize the *means* by which these rewards should be won, temptation, suffering, shame, death, last and not least, fortitude through the terrible ordeal, which was the outward evidence of accepting it all as the Will of His Father which He came on earth to do. No hint of the kind was given to Jacob ; his spiritual education, like that even of the disciples through many months of intimate intercourse with their Master, had stopped far short of this point.

Nor is it recorded that Jacob saw Heaven opened ; such a vision was not possible for him, nor indeed for any other mortal before the Son of God came to this earth. Why not ? Because its symbolical meaning in that revelation is complete, God's Will fully declared. This could only be declared to His own Son and to others through Him. The truth is indeed conveyed, not only by the vision which Jesus saw at His Baptism, but also by such words as " No man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him " ; and " No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Then, again, the phrase, " Son of Man," is applied to Our Lord as the Representative of the human race, thus conveying the truth that the Will of God is declared for *all* to know, that as His only begotten Son accepted suffering and death for the lot assigned to Him, so must

each one of the disciples for whom that may be the Will of his Heavenly Father. Whether to Nathanael was vouchsafed the vision literally of "Heaven opened" is, to say the least, extremely doubtful. Certainly he could not have seen anything of the kind that took place either in the solitude of the wilderness after Our Lord's temptation, or in Gethsemane after the agony. The most that can be said is that, supposing every word of St. Luke's description of Our Lord's Baptism by John be literally true, Nathanael may have been amongst those to whom such a vision was vouchsafed, that whoever Nathanael was, whether an Apostle or not, undoubtedly he may be included amongst those to whom the Son of God was willing to reveal the Father, or in other words, quoted from the Prophet Joel, amongst the sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens, on whom the Holy Spirit should be poured, so that they should prophesy. Again, the future history of most of the Gospel characters, even of the majority of the Apostles, is traditional and vague or altogether wanting; nevertheless, Nathanael being a disciple without a touch of insincerity, we may confidently assert that he shared afflictions and persecutions in common with others who are better known, such as James and John, Peter and Paul, and that to him, as to his Master, was vouchsafed comfort and strength in the hour of trial. Thus would be fulfilled the promise made to him on the first day of his new spiritual experience of 'Angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

THE CONSECRATED LIFE

BY THE REVEREND HENRY V. DER H. COWELL, B.A.

EPHESIANS v. 3

“As becometh saints.”

THE word “saint” has a narrower reference than it had originally. It is now generally suggestive of some exceptional form of piety. It calls up recollections of meek and seraphic faces, grouped around and held entranced by the person of Our Lord hanging in supreme suffering on the Cross, or rising triumphant from the tomb, or enthroned in majesty in Heaven—as these faces have been depicted for us, in purest colours and with most delicate touch, by a Perugino or a Fra Angelico. Or, it brings to mind some persons of rare sanctity, who stand out from the commonplace types of ordinary religionism, with marked beauty of character and devotedness of life, such as Bishop Ken, or Fletcher of Madeley, or Henry Martyn, or those unknown to fame but happily known to us, and deeply revered by us on account of their rich attainments in heavenly mindedness.

Now since the epithet has come to be thus limited in its reference, there is a danger lest such precepts as those connected with the text should lose their point. Persons are apt to turn them aside with some such remark as this: “I do not pretend to be a saint. I feel eminence in

holiness to be beyond my mark. The clay of which I am made is too coarse for me to aspire after being 'a vessel unto honour,' and if this were not so my circumstances would not allow of my being fashioned into a thing of beauty, here on earth. I must be satisfied with serving God in an ordinary way, leaving saintliness to those more finely formed or more happily circumstanced."

Such, I think, are probably the sentiments of many among us. Therefore, to prepare the way for an application of the Apostle's exhortations here and elsewhere, I propose to show you how unjustifiable is this narrowing of the term.

I remark then, to begin with, that a saintly life is incumbent on all who profess to be Christians.

That this is so, the introductory address in the several Epistles instructs us. Thus St. Paul writes "to all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"; "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints"; "To the saints which are at Ephesus"—a phrase evidently broad in its embrace as the membership of the Church, since the Apostle finds it necessary to caution against unworthy conduct in a way which would be irrelevant were his words addressed only to those specially advanced in sanctity.

We see, then, that the term "saint" is one originally employed to designate all who were enrolled in the Church of Christ. The word has, therefore, evidently lost the breadth which once belonged to it.

But it may be thought that what it has lost in breadth it has gained in depth. It may be supposed that a designation applied so widely cannot have connoted so high a standard of life as we now attach to it. But if we look at the commencement of the Epistle from which my text is taken, we shall find that this conjecture is entirely opposed to the language of the Apostle. For, immediately after the address which opens the Epistle, we find him

exclaiming, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." By writing in those terms to all whom he has addressed as saints, he shows in what sense he is to be understood in the use of that word. He clearly employed it to designate persons pledged to a holy life, and that in no conventional sense.

If it be asked how we are to reconcile such an exalted conception of saintliness thus widely applied with the existence in the early Church of such gross sins as those rebuked by the Apostle, I reply that, notwithstanding such cases of inconsistency, the early Christians were for the most part in character true to their calling, and that even those who dishonoured the name of saints would confess themselves bound to be what that epithet strictly implies—holy persons.

In the primitive Church, then, all Christians were addressed as "saints," because saintliness was generally accepted as the standard to which all professed Christians should strive to be conformed.

But, in time, two influences served to lower this sense of obligation and to render the duty of all henceforth the special aim only of the few. These influences were the influx into the Church of persons moved to the profession of the Faith by worldly motives and the spread of asceticism.

Before Christianity was accepted by the Emperor Constantine as a State religion, its profession cost much; afterwards it cost little. Before that it hindered social advancement; afterwards, it helped such advancement. Before that, it involved obloquy and perhaps cruel persecution; afterwards, it brought credit and convenience. The consequence was that the general standard of life in the Church became lowered. And because but few lived

as saints the title was reserved for the holier ones whose conduct was in harmony with it.

And, in addition to this, mistaken opinions as to the condition in which a holy life could be maintained gradually gained ground. Asceticism spread its roots and soon began to draw off to itself the more earnest, and others were content to believe that an exalted life was reserved for those who could withdraw from the common occupations of life, while they would be excused in living on a lower level.

By the concurrence of these influences, it came to pass that men ceased to deem a saintly life the duty of all, and began to assign the name of saint—which was originally applied to all Christians—to those who attained sanctity, after which but few aspired.

And these causes are operating still to the same effect. Because a religious profession is more or less a pass to respectability, for the many who call themselves Christians there are but few who wish to be saints. And because men find it inconvenient to be holy they persuade themselves there is something in the ordinary avocations of life averse to it which involves a virtual belief in the principle at the root of asceticism.

I have already met the first of these causes by showing from Holy Scripture that holiness is required of all Christians. I pass on now to meet the second by showing what is involved in living "as becometh saints." The idea underlying the word rendered "saint" in the New Testament is *devotion to God*. As "holy vessels" in the Old Testament were vessels set apart for and employed in the service of God, so holy persons are in the Bible persons whose lives are surrendered to the Lord.

Now in this surrender two things are involved—separation and consecration; separation from all purposes foreign from the service of God, and consecration of heart and life to all the requirements of that service.

These, then, are the essentials to a saintly life. And

these, although they have often been supposed to necessitate exceptional modes of living, in reality demand nothing from men that all cannot render if they desire to do so.

I have said that the first principle involved in a saintly life is *separation*. As to the fact all are agreed ; but when we come to ask what is involved in separation, differences of opinion show themselves : some asserting that it necessitates the abandonment of the common callings of life, and others maintaining that to become saints we need not become anchorites. We have to ask then, *From what* are we required to be separated ? To this question some reply, " From the world " ; others say, " From the evil that is in the world—whether in the world around or in the world within the man."

Let us bring then this crucial question to the test of the Word of God.

Now in Our Lord's valedictory prayer, we find Him saying, " For their sakes I sanctify (or consecrate) Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." And how did Our Lord consecrate Himself ? By withdrawing from men ? No ; but by being " separate from sinners "—that is to say, by shunning their practices and eschewing their principles. And in this way He would have us to be separate ; for did He not say, " I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil " ? The separation required, then, in order to saintliness, is separation in spirit, not in space ; separation from sin, not from the ordinary surroundings of the life.

Saintliness, then, it would seem from Scripture, is quite compatible with our mingling with men and engaging in the common affairs of the world.

And history confirms this inference. On the one hand, it records for our instruction the unsatisfactory result on the whole—notwithstanding noble exceptions—of the recluse life : proving that it tends to develop eccentricities

rather than to shape in saintliness. And on the other hand it shows, by many beautiful examples, that sin may be successfully combated in the midst of life's ordinary callings.

A suspicion of this seems, at times, to have crossed even the minds of those who devoted themselves to an ascetic life. For an instructive legend tells how an old hermit, who had passed many years in fasting and prayer and had become puffed up with spiritual pride, prayed one day that if there were a saintlier soul than his, or one who took a loftier view of the Christian life, God would reveal the fact to him. Whereupon, the story says, a mist fell from his eyes and he saw, in a vision, a dark lane in a great city near, and then in a squalid chamber beheld a shoemaker bending over his last, pointing to whom an Angel exclaimed, "There is one holier than thou."

The "Lives of the Saints" show most convincingly that withdrawment from the world fails to secure necessarily avoidance of evil, which is too closely bound up with our being to be shunned in this way. And, on the other hand, the biographies of men who have mingled with their fellows and yet have kept their garments unspotted from the world attest that it is possible to be pious without making ourselves peculiar, and that to become holy we need not become hermits. Thus Louis of France ruled over his spirit while ruling over his realm; thus Sir Matthew Hale cultivated a devout life, while engaged in administering justice from the bench; thus Havelock fought the good fight of faith no less successfully because he played a valiant part the while in his profession as a soldier; thus Buxton lived near to God while occupied in a business which might be supposed more than most to be unfavourable to a state of sanctity.

The separation, then, required for the attainment of saintliness does not necessitate a removal from the world, but only an abandonment of its evil. What St.

Paul calls upon us to shun that we may walk "as becometh saints" is, not intercourse with our fellows, but impurity and frivolity.

And if we pass from the negative to the positive side of saintliness, and ask what is involved in the idea of consecration, we shall find still that a holy life is quite compatible with such a round of engagements as those which occupy you, my brethren, day by day, and week by week. For, if we look at the words which precede my text, we see that while by their reference to the sacrifice of Our Saviour they might be supposed to demand something abnormal, such a supposition is corrected by the injunction in which the requirements of that life are summed up, namely this, "Walk in love."

Very helpful to us, I think, are these words in indicating to us in what a true consecration to God consists. They teach us that the dominance over our powers of a spirit of love is the unction which will give savour to our life and will render it an offering acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.

What is requisite, then, to our living—"as becometh saints"—consecrated lives, is not a continual devotion of ourselves to religious functions, but the sanctification of all that we have and all that we are by the fact of a presiding spirit of love regulating our lives.

What is opposed to consecration to God is not earthly employments—but sinful selfishness. If only that be cast out by the enshrining of love then our everyday duties will supply us constantly with facilities for living out our surrender to God. For we consecrate the *body*, when, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God; we consecrate the *soul* when we use our minds in the interests of others, whether in exercising our wits in providing for those whom God has given us, or in trying to instruct or enliven by discourse of reason or play of fancy; we consecrate our *spirit* when we bring to bear upon transient actions the powers of the world

to come, and on common occasions give unconscious evidence that we are actuated by a higher principle than a courting of the favour of men and live for other ends than the social advancement and material comfort which influence so largely the world around.

It is not necessary, then, in order to our living saintly lives, that we should always be doing distinctly religious actions ; all that is requisite is that we should be always actuated by a religious spirit. If that be acquired, then the artist who strives so to paint as to show that the All-Beautiful has made gleams of His loveliness to shine out in the fleeting phases of Nature, and the poet, who endeavours to awaken within the soul yearnings of the human heart after the infinite and eternal, and the lawyer who tries to secure divine equity for those who have been wronged, and the merchant or tradesman who brings God's kindly supply into relation with man's multifarious wants, and the housewife who endeavours to train the children of the family as heirs of immortality—all of these, and others living in a like spirit are consecrating their powers to God no less than the clergyman in preparing his sermon or leading the devotions of his people, or the noble woman who, having no family claims, resolves to devote her days to alleviating suffering and assisting the healing art ; and all such may, in the truest sense of the term, live "as becometh saints."

A saintly life, then, is possible to all of us ; for it demands only separation from sin, and dedication to God in the ordinary duties of life, of power, guided by a spirit which strives to do God's Will. And love enables us to meet both requirements : by the antagonisms which it creates it keeps aloof from that which is contrary to God's Will, and, by the impulses it gives, it leads us to act in harmony with that Will. And so it gradually moulds the character after the Divine Mind, and makes each after his kind saintly before God.

The one great need, then, in order to our living a saintly

life is the cultivation of that charity which being "of God" conforms to God. And this the Blessed Spirit of God is willing to impart without measure to us, so that the very highest attainment in saintliness is possible to us, if only we seek the transforming power of God's grace and live out consistently those principles which He imparts, shunning all such things as are contrary to our holy religion and seeking all such things as are agreeable to the same.

This, dear brethren, God helping us, let us do ; for the standard of religion sadly needs raising. As we advance in saintliness God looks upon us with increasing satisfaction, and the most potent evidence of the truth of religion is a saintly life.

Sensible of this a godly man is said to have cried with passionate earnestness : "O God, *give us saints!*" His prayer was a good one. But I think a better is : "O God, *make us saints!*"

May that prayer rise from every heart here present, and God will assuredly respond to our cry, for "this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

But eminence in saintliness is not reached by a sudden bound of our being. It is attained only by constant effort invigorated and sustained by earnest prayer. Let us therefore plead morning by morning :

"Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design or do or say ;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In Thy sole glory may unite."

And let us take heed that we "receive not the grace of God in vain." Then by God's co-working we shall come gradually to walk more and more "as becometh saints."

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

"GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS"

BY THE REVEREND ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

ST. JOHN vi. 12.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

THE command, as it confronts us in the miracle of feeding the five thousand, is certainly a startling one. What is the meaning of this strange care about morsels from a store which in Christ's hands was inexhaustible?

First and foremost it is a protest against *Waste*. If He, Who could feed thousands with the food for ten, thought it right to be careful about crusts of bread and pieces of fish, shall *we* dare to be wasteful, who can create nothing and multiply nothing, and can merely accumulate what exists? So long as this miracle with its concluding command remains on record, waste will be a sin, and a sin against light.

But the miracle is no solitary instance of Divine economy. Economy is the law of Divine government. The all-creating Power squanders nothing. But before we look above let us look below. Does not human philosophy contend for *its* Law of Parsimony? Is not our highest admiration given to those who produce great results by *simple* means? It is by this standard that we test the productions not merely of the engineer and architect, but of the statesman and the poet. The more complicated a machine, the less its utility. The more

intricate a form of government, the greater its liability to fail in a great crisis. Even in æsthetics, simplicity of plan is power.

We may trace the same standard in the workings of the universe at large. The further our knowledge extends, the less ground there is for believing that anything exists as a mere parade of the Creator's resources. So far as we can tell, nothing remains unused, and therefore nothing exists that could be spared.

Glance for a moment at the *material* world. Where can we point to an atom or a force that can be shown to have been squandered? Where can we add or take away anything? Burn with your hottest furnaces; grind with your most powerful mills; not one single force can you either produce or annihilate; not one speck of matter can you either create or destroy.

So also in the *spiritual* world. No spiritual force can ever perish, no fragment of truth can ever die. Every thought which the heart of man has conceived, every memory it has dwelt upon, every word it has prompted, is living yet; generating, moulding, swaying the thoughts and memories and words of generation after generation. Yes, indeed, whether we like it or no, whether we heed it or no, the thoughts and words which you and I think and utter this day are helping to mould our characters, and the characters of those about us, and of those who are to come after us; to mould them not only in time but in eternity. We may let our thoughts run riot, and fling about our words without heed or care; but for all that the fragments *are* gathered up and nothing is lost.

Such, then, is human and Divine perfection as we trace it in philosophy and art, in creation and revelation—the perfection of economy. And such is the perfection at which we, each in our sphere, must aim. In all the gifts committed to our charge, we must gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.

Fragments of *wealth*. Mere worldly wisdom

teaches economy here. But what *it* inculcates as self-interested prudence, we must learn as Christian charity. The more we save, the more we have to give. And with benevolence for our end we shall have a safeguard against meanness. Living, as so many of us do, in the midst of comfort, if not of luxury, we ought to find many fragments to gather up and bestow. And, along with these savings from what God has lent to us, let us give a little thought. It is easy, and often pleasant, to give money : *not* so easy to make sure that it is wisely given. To give only to free oneself from importunity, or from the pain of leaving unrelieved some apparent case of distress, is not benevolence but selfishness. Find out some way not merely of giving, but of *doing good*, and then bestow what you can. Let us honestly reckon up what we spend on our pleasures, and we shall find some more fragments to gather up and give.

Fragments of *time*. If waste of money is a common fault, much more common, and shall we not say much more grievous, is waste of time. We all of us, even the very poorest, have time to waste, and it is a waste that benefits no one, and which can never be made good. The spend-thrift's money may be a help to those among whom he scatters it, and his shattered fortune may be repaired. But squandered time is of use to no one, and the wasted hour can *never* be regained. If we look back over the past, and honestly read the record that our own conduct has written there, we may well tremble to think of the fortune of golden moments wantonly flung away, for which we have nothing but a growth of saddening memories to show. Here surely we have much to learn in the way of gathering up the fragments. And this implies no slavishly punctilious distribution of our time, such as to forbid innocent recreations, which are a real economy in the end, in that they refit us for work. But it *does* imply that every moment should have a *meaning*, that there should be no indolent drifting through life, but that even

in our meat and drink we should have an aim, and a high aim, even the glory of God. “The night cometh in which no man can work.” For some of us the hour in which we shall have no more time to squander may be very near. Ere it comes, let us be on the watch to gather up all we may, that no more hours be lost.

Fragments of *influence*. Even the most insignificant and least gifted among us have something of personal influence, something which makes us for good or for evil a distinct power in the world. Every talent with which God has endowed us increases this power. Yet how careless we are about guarding it, and even more careless about the use we make of it. None of you need to be told of what personal influence may effect: how a word or a look in season may stop a whole flood of folly and sin. Many of us can remember times when we have been deeply grateful to someone who has dared to speak out against the evil which we loathed in our inmost souls, but before which we quailed. You who are conscious that you are in some degree leading spirits in your own little world, you who cannot but feel that what you say and do has large effect on what is said and done by others, defile not this noble talent in the mire, squander it not in petty self-aggrandisement; but gather up every fragment of it to strengthen those weaker souls, for influence over whom you will one day have to give account.

Fragments of *happiness*. What have we done with these? We have all of us had them. But how thanklessly we received them, how recklessly we spent them, or heedlessly suffered them to pass away. Like thistledown across a waste they have fled past, leaving no softening influences behind, no treasure of grateful memories to mellow the present and the future. There is not too much happiness in the world: let us not be wasteful of what falls to our lot. Like so many of God’s gifts, we seem to know its value best when we have lost it. And it is well that we do lose it. The loss reminds us of our need to look

onwards and upwards to that happiness which is everlasting.

Think me not strange if I add to this list of treasures which we habitually waste, fragments of *sorrow*. We all of us have our trials, great or small: sicknesses, disappointments, bereavements, and those which are the saddest of all, the troubles of our own making, the ghosts of past sins. There is the "vacant chaff, well-meant for grain," of those who tell us to put away the painful thoughts. It may be hard at first, but we shall forget them in time. Alas! that it must be so; but let us not hasten the forgetfulness. Rather let us treasure up this store of chastening, humbling memories—memories which beat down our pride, which call us off from the world, which remind us in the midst of our pleasures and successes that we have here no abiding city. Let go the bitterness, but gather up the sorrow, for "blessed are those that weep now; blessed are those that mourn."

Lastly and above all, fragments of *grace and devotion*. There is that Bread of Life which cometh down from Heaven. How have we welcomed it? How have we treasured it? Over and over again it has been rejected or tasted and flung aside. How often in secret whisperings of conscience, in suggestions to do good, in calls to a stricter life, in ordinances and sacraments, Christ has come unto His own inheritance, and His own people have received Him not. And His blessings need no painful search; they lie at our very doors; they fall around us, like the manna in the wilderness; but we will not gather them up. Dare any of us say that we make the most of the glimpses of His presence granted to us here, the frequent services, the frequent Communions? How has it been with us this very day? Thoughts wandering through half, or more than half, the service. Here again let us make the most of what is not yet wasted. Let us gather up the praise and prayer that still remains, that nothing more be lost.

Alas! that with some of us the fragments of a shattered life are all that we now have to offer. Our work can no longer be, what once it might have been, the preparing a royal banquet for Our Lord, but only a gathering up of fragments. Broken vows, broken resolves, a crumbling faith, are all that we now have to set before Him. But if they be offered with a contrite and a broken heart, He will not reject them. Let us gather them up and piece them together, and He will bind them up and bless them. Out of even these poor fragments He can still supply a store that will strengthen many a hungry soul in the wilderness.

And let us remember this, that if *we* do not gather them up, there is One Who will. He Who numbers even the hairs of our head, takes account of these things also. And if we persist in letting the fragments of our wealth and time, of our influence and opportunities, of our joys and sorrows and devotion, still run to waste, uncared for or misused, He will gather them up to the last mite, to confront us in that day when we must give an account of our stewardship. While there is still time to save something, while there still abides something to save, let us—even though it be with cold and palsied hands—gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

THE CLEANSING BLOOD

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS SAUNDERS EVANS, D.D.

HEBREWS ix. 14

“The Blood of Christ.”

FEW students of Scripture can fail to remark how often the Blood of Christ is mentioned, and what emphasis is laid upon it.

“The Blood of sprinkling,” it is called; “the Blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel”; “the Blood of a Lamb without blemish and without spot”; “the Blood of price with which the Church was purchased”; “the Blood which cleanseth from all sin.”

When it was outpoured upon the Cross, it was the Blood of the Sacrifice shed for the remission of sins, not only of believers but of the whole world; for “without shedding or outpouring of blood no remission comes to pass.” Why this effusion should be a condition necessary to remission we cannot tell: it is a secret belonging to God. We learn indeed from Lev. xvii. 11 that “the soul of the flesh is in the blood: the blood it is which makes an atonement for the soul.” And results of modern science seem to confirm the statement of Scripture that “the soul of the flesh is in the blood”; e.g., the famous Dr. Hervey writes—“the soul has its abode in the blood as long as life lasts; the blood is the fountain of life, the first to live and the last to die; it is the primary seat of the

original soul." But nevertheless, why or how the Blood of Christ, Who "poured out His soul unto death," should, thus outpoured on the Cross, possess the property of atoning, expiating, reconciling to God, is still a mystery not yet revealed. That it is an indisputable fact, Scripture abundantly testifies.

But there is another virtue in this sacred Blood. As it was once outpoured for the redeeming of all mankind, so is it now often sprinkled for the cleansing of all believers : one effusion, but many aspersions—one shedding, but countless sprinklings ; and in fact the cleansing of the thoughts of the heart, the purging of the conscience from dead works, is ascribed in Holy Writ not only to the inbreathing of the Holy Ghost, but to the sprinkling of the sacred Blood ; and that, in language so simple and vivid as to lead some to infer that when the Great High Priest above intercedes for us with the Father, He seems to appeal to His own Blood, as if It were a real thing there present, as if after being once outpoured upon earth It had been conveyed in Its essence into Heaven.

Certainly St. Paul seems to speak of this Blood as of a thing still subsisting, just in the same way as he does of the Body, when he writes to the Corinthians—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ ; and the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ ?"

The Apostle clearly puts the Body and the Blood in the same category, as both being in the same place in Heaven, somewhere before the Divine Presence. And it is not unreasonable to suppose, if Our Blessed Lord's immaculate Body, when dead, did not see corruption, that His immaculate Blood, when shed, did not abide in dispersion, but being Itself also incorruptible was assigned a place somewhere in the Sanctuary of Heaven near to our glorified High Priest. This appears highly probable from the curious fact that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the long list of the manifold glories of the Heavenly

City, immediately after the name of Jesus the Mediator, is added, "the Blood of sprinkling still speaking better things than the blood of Abel."

This view has been advocated by Chrysostom amongst ancient expositors, by Bengel amongst the modern. And if this view be correct, we must conceive the Incarnate Son of God, on earth through sufferings and death becoming the Sacrifice, and now in Heaven as High Priest presenting Himself the Victim, and appealing to His own Blood lying apart from His own Body. That human Blood Divine, as I may term it, applied by sprinkling has the virtue of cleansing. "The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son," says St. John, "cleanseth from all sin." It is here described as the Blood of the Son of God; for it is here no common blood, but a peculiar and singular Blood, and therefore it "cleanseth from all sin."

Whom does it thus cleanse? All men? Not so: that is not stated by St. John. It was outpoured indeed for all men without exception: it was shed for the multitudinous unit sin of the whole world; but it does not follow that it cleanseth by sprinkling all men.

Are there limitations then? Yes, there are, and these are specified clearly enough; nevertheless, St. John's words are often quoted as if there were no limitations, or as if a bare assent of the understanding were faith enough to procure this cleansing from all sin. The limitations or conditions necessary to the efficacy of this holy sprinkling are so plainly written that he who runs may read. "If we"—baptized Christians—"walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and"—if thus walking we thus have fellowship, in that case—"the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." If we walk in that moral and spiritual light, if we move in the sunshine of those several rays that combine to make the perfect light—e.g., if we follow after purity, temperance, honesty, loving-kindness, mutual forbearance, readiness to forgive, humility, meekness,

long-suffering, and (last, but not least) charity—then our fellowship and communion with God and with one another as members of the indivisible Church of Christ is unbroken, undissolved, unimpaired, nay strengthened and cemented ; and under such happy circumstances it is that “ the Blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin.”

For a man who walketh only in darkness, who is an evildoer, whose very moral atmosphere is sin—for him there is no sprinkling of the Blood that cleanses. The Great Advocate above may plead his cause, the Great High Priest may intercede for him ; but, unless he turn away from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, for him there is no sprinkling, no cleansing.

But for us, if we walk in the light of God, there is this purification ; and day by day we need it. For, as the wicked man is not altogether wicked, and his moral darkness is not one black night of solid gloom, but is chequered here and there with flickering flashes of virtuous actions, so the righteous man finds, to his bitter grief, that though by doing what is lawful and right he would fain ever bask in the sunshine of God’s love in Christ, yet the spiritual sunshine whereby he guides his steps is sometimes clouded by a passing sin, and sometimes (if he grow careless) is apt to be overcast altogether, and to fade into a perilous twilight akin to darkness.

But meanwhile, if we walk in this moral and spiritual light as He is in it—with an undivided heart and to the best of our finite power—we hold communion and fellowship with God and His Christ, and with His brethren and our brethren. There is a bond of fellowship, a mystic circle of communion, which we cannot see, which we cannot touch : it binds together the past, the present, and the future : death cannot break it, hell cannot reach it—even the spiritual bond of eternal love. Of the myriad members of this saintly fraternity, some (the majority) are gone before : we (the minority) still linger here.

Yet, even now, we are one with them and they with us : all members of the same divine commonwealth ; 'tis but the veil of the flesh, 'tis but the thin barrier of death that divides us from them ; and even now some stray glimpses of an unearthly light are permitted to struggle from thence hitherward ; for, to us who are baptized into Christ, who are called after His great name, who bear on our brows and should bear in our hearts and lives the signature of His Cross—to us Christians the very earth on which we are is holy ground, the vestibule of Paradise, the very threshold of Heaven itself. Unwitting, uncaring it may be, we do stand here on earth in the unseen presence of Angels and Archangels and all the company of Heaven ; for we are come nigh unto the City of the Living God, unto the Church of the firstborn, and unto the spirits of just men made perfect ; yea, unto Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and unto that Blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for it cleanseth from all sin.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

BY THE REVEREND WALTER HOBHOUSE, D.D.

I CORINTHIANS i. 23, 24.

"We preach Christ crucified," etc.

WE have come once more to Palm Sunday and Holy Week, and for the next few days the services of the Church will continually be directing our thoughts to the Cross of Christ. In the Gospels and in the Lessons we shall have the story of the Crucifixion, and all that led up to it, recounted to us in the words of the Evangelists ; and from every pulpit preachers will be appealing to Christian men and women to fix their thoughts for a little space upon the tremendous scene which was once enacted at Calvary. After nineteen centuries the Church is still preaching "Christ crucified." And if she finds that there are many for whom the appeal to come to the Cross of Christ seems to have little force, she knows at least that she is only repeating the experience of the great Apostle St. Paul.

To the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness—that was St. Paul's experience, when he wrote to the Church of Corinth. We can trace that experience for ourselves in the records, fragmentary though they are, which remain to us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles. To the Jew, to whom (Apostle of the Gentiles though he was) St. Paul never ceased to make appeal

wherever he went, the Cross was an "offence," a stumbling-block. A Crucified Saviour was not what the Jew was looking for: what he wanted was a triumphant Messiah Who would make Himself a temporal Monarch, Who would remove the hated yoke of the Roman, and "restore again the Kingdom to Israel."

The Jew craved for a new Theocracy, in which God would give visible and irrefragable proof of His presence among, and His favour towards, His chosen people. And therefore during Our Lord's ministry the Jews wanted a "sign"; they asked for some visible manifestation of miraculous Divine Power, which would be a guarantee that Christ was indeed such a Messiah as they were expecting. The Crucifixion, therefore, was the complete negation of their hopes: it was to the Jew the final disproof of any claim to worship that Jesus might seem to have possessed. If He had been the Son of God He would never have allowed Himself to be placed upon the Cross—or, if He had allowed it, it would only have been in order to make a more striking display of supernatural power by coming down from it unaided or through the help of the legions of Angels who would obey the summons of the Son of God.

We know how strong this feeling was in the minds even of the Apostles themselves: it was only the Resurrection, and their intercourse with the Risen Saviour, which could restore their faith in Him. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles we see how in every city the mass of the Jewish population opposed and persecuted St. Paul, and derided his preaching of Christ crucified. The idea of a suffering, humiliated Saviour, taking upon Him the "form of a slave," and making Himself "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," did not appeal to them: it was an "offence," a stumbling-block to their religious ideal; it ran counter to their national pride.

But if it was difficult to persuade the Jews to accept

a crucified Saviour, there was an even greater feeling of repulsion which had to be overcome in the case of the Greeks—that is to say of the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the Roman Empire, which included practically the whole of the educated class. To the Greek the Cross was “foolishness”; something puerile and ridiculous; something which it was an insult to ask a man to accept as the foundation of his religion or the key to his philosophy of life. To the Greek the ideal of life was culture, self-development, self-expression in art and poetry—one might almost say self-indulgence in pleasure. The objects of his worship were the Powers of Nature—the sun, the earth, the sea, the wine god—or sometimes even deities which typified human passions such as love and lust; and in St. Paul’s time it had become customary for the Greeks to worship human success and human greatness by conferring divine honours upon rulers or great men at their death, or even before it, as in the case of the Roman Emperors. But amidst all these various worships we do not find any desire to worship any deity who was associated with humility, self-denial, or restraint, or apparent failure. That was a dark and seamy side of life upon which the Greek generally preferred to dwell as little as possible; to him humiliation was contemptible, and such a scene as that of the Crucifixion would only inspire him with disgust.

And so St. Paul’s task with the Greek was quite as hard as his task with the Jew, in some ways harder. The Jew had at least the idea that religion might imply restraint, and sacrifice; he knew something of the discipline of suffering both for the individual and the nation; he had heard the voice of prophet after prophet proclaiming ideals which partook largely of asceticism and self-abasement, and he had a “zeal for God,” even though it was not according to knowledge. To the Greek, whether he accepted the current views of popular religion, or whether he had outgrown them and had put in their

place the teachings of philosophy, the preaching of Christ crucified was a cause of surprise and contempt and even of disgust ; in his eyes the preacher of such a doctrine was a superstitious fanatic. He could not and would not believe that the key to all the problems of the world lay in the execution of One Who seemed to him to be a common malefactor of the despised race of the Jews !

These, then, were the difficulties that St. Paul met with ; and he was quite aware of them. He had been a Pharisee of Pharisees ; he knew his fellow-countrymen through and through. He was also a Roman citizen ; he spoke Greek, and knew something of Greek literature and of Greek philosophy. He was under no illusion as to the reception that the story of the Cross was likely to meet with. But for all that he did not compromise the truth or adulterate his message to make it palatable. He put the humiliation and the death of Christ in the forefront : in that alone he would glory, that above all things he would preach. And yet we know that St. Paul was no rigid, impracticable extremist—he was “ all things to all men,” ever ready to see where he could find some point of agreement, some common bond of sympathy. And therefore when we find St. Paul laying this great stress upon the sufferings and the death of Christ at the risk of provoking this strong contempt, this violent antagonism, we may be sure that it was because he felt that Christ’s death upon the Cross was the most vital point of the Gospel.

He was not content to preach Christ’s example, or Christ’s miracles of healing, or Christ’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, or even Christ risen and ascended ; he must needs preach Christ crucified, because he believed that through His death He made atonement for the sins of the world, and that through that atonement alone could man obtain reconciliation with God. That most undoubtedly was St. Paul’s belief, and it gave him courage to proclaim his unpopular message. He was certain of its truth, and he knew that those who once accepted it

would be able to verify it for themselves by experience. They would "taste and see how gracious the Lord is." To those who were called, and who listened to the call, the crucified Christ would prove to be "the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God." And so, we know, it proved. In the minds of many, both Jews and Greeks, there were forces at work which overcame their national prejudices. There were Jews to whom, as they listened, the conviction came that "this was indeed very Christ" and that He "ought so to have suffered." There were Greeks who, as they looked at the surpassing wickedness of the society in which they lived, were kindled by the ideal of gentleness and love and self-sacrifice which the Cross presented to them, and which was in such strong contrast to all the teaching that they had listened to before, and to the atmosphere around them.

"On that hard pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell."

One by one they found the remedy in the crucified Saviour Who was preached to them, and each one who found his load of weariness and sin removed from him told others of the secret and said to them, like Philip to Nathanael, "Come and see." There is no need for philosophers to tabulate the reasons why Christianity spread: it spread because it met the needs of the human heart, and gave peace instead of perplexity, hope in the place of despair. And, in the main, the preachers of Christianity who succeeded St. Paul have been true to his principles. They were "not ashamed of the Cross of Christ": they preached Christ crucified. The Cross became the symbol of the new religion, and the triumphs of that religion have been won in virtue of its power. "The foolishness of God has been wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men."

To the Jews a stumbling-block—to the Greeks foolishness ; and what, we may ask, to the Englishman of to-day ? What can we honestly say ? It is hard to generalize about things close beside us. There are, thank God, many for whom the Cross has attractive power, many who follow the story year by year with fervent love and thankfulness. But there are many also who pass by, or look on unmoved. Perhaps it is not exactly the contempt of the Greek, nor the indignation of the Jew, which is the prevalent feeling among those who reject the Cross to-day. It seems to be rather a feeling of indifference or absence of conviction. The whole story, men say, may not be true—or, if Christ did suffer on the Cross, we cannot be certain that He was really God—and if He were the Son of God, even then it is not plain why His death should be the condition of atonement and forgiveness. And so some of those who do think about religion, though they think loosely, turn away cold and unmoved ; and others are so immersed in money-making or pleasure-seeking that they do not think at all about it—indeed they take care to avoid thinking of anything which might turn out to have claims upon them that it would be inconvenient to acknowledge.

It is not for us to judge too harshly those who turn away altogether from Christ crucified. It is more profitable for us to think how we, who in some measure acknowledge the duty of fixing our thoughts upon the Cross and endeavouring to follow its lessons, may make best use of our opportunities, and help others to do the same. We must put ourselves in sympathy with its teaching. We must approach it with some portion of “ the mind which was in Christ Jesus ” ; we must not be worshipping success or power or pleasure ; we must not be hidebound in self-complacency—or else we shall be listening to the story of Holy Week in vain. The desire to serve others, the will to become as little children, the recognition of the discipline which comes through sorrow and through

suffering, the conviction of sin, the desire for purification and forgiveness, the realization of the union of Divinity and humanity in Him through Whom this forgiveness is offered to us—these are the things which will help us to approach the Cross of Christ in the mood and temper in which alone it can be profitable to come. And to those who approach it thus Christ crucified will be, not a stumbling-block, not foolishness, but the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. The humble will be exalted, the sufferer will have his burden lightened, the penitent will win a sense of forgiveness, and the believer will be strengthened in his conviction that “truly this was the Son of God.”

MAUNDY THURSDAY

THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD

BY THE REVEREND HORATIO NELSON GRIMLEY, M.A.

ST. MATTHEW xxvi. 26, 28.

"This is My Body . . . This is My Blood."

As on this day in a far-off year, Our Blessed Lord said, when in the presence of His disciples He had taken bread and given thanks and broken it, "This is My Body." And of a cup of wine which He had before Him, He said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My Blood," or, "This is My Blood of the New Covenant." Our Lord when He uttered these words gave utterance to eternal truth. His words have been pondered on by all Christendom ever since. They are still the theme of earnest meditation. They are presented to us to-day for our solemn consideration.

"This is My Body"—"This is My Blood." In order that the deepest meaning within these words may be received by us we must be mindful of this, that they were uttered by the Divine Lord of Humanity. We must be mindful of this, too, that all things in the great universe are in living union with the Lord of all. The breath of life permeates them all—the breath of a life proceeding from Him. Even that which we speak of as motionless matter, and which to our dull senses seems inert, is discerned by the keener insight of our minds to be not far removed from spirit. We recognize all things as manifestations of the

thought and life of the Lord of Heaven. So that for Our Divine Lord to identify Himself with any of His created things, when between them all and Himself there is a living bond of union, gives rise to no marvelling in us, who believe that in Him all things dwell, and that He dwells in them. His words then, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," are the expression of an eternal truth. What He says has evermore been true. It will be true for ever. Even if that which He utters had never before dawned upon human minds, it had been true in all the ages past. It was not true simply by reason of His words at the moment : it had ever been true by reason of His indwelling, informing Word. His words uttered as on this solemn day are the revelation to us of an everlasting, unchanging truth. His words wrought no change in the bread and wine, though in their completeness they include the statement of a change to which bread and wine have ever been and ever will be subject.

It has been well said that parents may assert of the sustenance they provide for their children, "This is my flesh and my blood." Do we not see the assertion to be true in a very real sense when we think of a mother and her babe? Is it not true, though in not so direct a manner, when the sustenance has been provided by an expenditure of mental and physical energy? Do not all toiling fathers and careworn mothers give of their very flesh and blood to the children they love?

"This is My Body which is given for you"—"This is My Blood which is shed for you." Not only are these words the expression of an eternal truth, of a truth unchangeable through all the ages ; they are also words in which may be discerned the utterance of a truth of a higher order still—a truth even of higher spiritual import—a truth bearing upon the mystic union between Christ Himself and the Church henceforth to be reared upon the realm of human souls. Not only is there a vital union between all things of the created world and Our Divine

Lord, there is also a still more intimate bond of union between ourselves and Him. Our very bodies are each the temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus the Body of the Lord. And is not the Church, in another and still higher sense, the Lord's Body? We call it His Mystical Body. When, therefore, Our Lord says of bread and wine, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," He gives expression to His Divine recognition of the bread and wine as destined to be in due time His own Body and Blood. As food they become assimilated to and incorporated with the body and blood of each of those who partake of them. In the Divine thoughts they are what they will become.

To the Divine mind the stream of life is continuous. Its whole course is one. The little rill is at one with the mighty ocean towards which it flows. The one thought, unity, associates commencements and ultimate issues. In the beginning, in origin, all life is from the Lord. In the end all life is still in union with the Lord—in the union of an ennobled, exalted consciousness.

The Lord looks upon forms of life—forms of life which to our blind sight are only what we can crumble between our fingers, crush with our teeth, or pour into cup and raise to our lips and drink of—He looks upon forms of life in which we in undiscerning hurry see no life at all, and beholds in them what they will henceforth be—what they will be transformed or transubstantiated into. By virtue of the unity proceeding through channels of Divine control they are what their transubstantiation will finally make them. The Lord's voice declares them to be at one with what they will finally become. He identifies the life in them from Himself with the life which in the Divine order of His new creation—in the Divine order of His Heavenly Kingdom which He has come to establish amongst human souls—will find its fullness and perfection in endless union with Himself.

Let us ponder well on this thought that I am trying to present to you. Recognition of it would, in our

outwardly divided Christianity, be fraught with beneficent consequences.

Have not our mistakes in the past—and mistakes there must have been in a state of trial and progress in which we know only in part, in which our discernment of things as they are is limited and hindered—have not our past mistakes arisen from the dimness of our vision and the imperfection of our knowledge? We have been accustomed to divide God's universe which is one and indivisible into two, and say that the visible part is but matter, and to associate with the word "matter" as we used it thoughts of deadness and inertness. But now we are discerning—the thought is coming upon us with an impetuous rush—that there is no such thing as deadness in any part of God's universe. God is not the God of the dead. That which we call matter we are now fast being made increasingly conscious of as thrilling with life even to its minutest atoms. And that life comes from the Source of all life. That life comes from Our Divine Lord. All visible things, too, have to be recognized by us as symbols of His wisdom, as embodied words of His love. His life is in them. He, the Lord Jesus, in Whom we see the fullness of the Godhead manifested bodily, apart from Whom we say that the Godhead does not exist—He in His Divine Humanity has ascended far above all things so that He may fill all things, so that His life may flow into all things. We may thus even extend our assertion and say, not only that apart from Christ God does not exist, but also that apart from His universe His existence cannot be by us acknowledged.

We cannot, therefore, sever Him from the creations of His wisdom and love. We cannot thrust Him away from even the tiniest particle of bread, from the smallest drop of the fruit of the vine. Words which He has uttered over them we must not shrink from accepting. "This is My Body," "This is My Blood." In these words we must still hear the accents of His voice. In

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bread and wine His love is embodied and His wisdom flows. In them is His life. That life is transubstantiated—the thoughts that I put before you rehabilitate the word and restore it to its rightful meaning—into the life of our natural bodies, which are each the Temple of His Spirit, the Body of His abiding presence ; it is further transubstantiated in us as we live together the united life, the life of Holy Communion in truth and love, into the life of the Church, the life of His Mystical Body.

But there are higher thoughts still to be thankfully welcomed by us. Our Lord Who says of bread and wine, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," also says, "I am the Bread of Life," "I am the true Vine"—"My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed"—"Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life."

When, in obedience to His word, and in remembrance of Himself, we celebrate the Blessed Sacrament which He instituted, we do so in association with one another. That association in its higher phase is fellowship and communion. It may be said that fellowship with one another is promoted by every meal we partake of with our brothers and sisters ; that in breaking of bread we may ever become known to one another. This may be said with truth ; but there is a higher truth that we must reach forward unto, that higher truth is shadowed forth for us in our Lord's words telling us that it is only in union with Him that we can have life. We may have fellowship with one another beneficently on the lower plane on which we associate with one another at homely meals to eat of the bread and drink of the fruit of the vine given unto us by the Lord, but the fellowship of eternal life, the communion of the spiritual life, can only be ours when, as we unite with one another, we are individually and collectively united with the Lord. The life that Our Lord can bestow upon us by our dwelling in Him, and His

dwelling in us, as we eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, is association with others, that association which is the highest fellowship, the holiest communion we can have with one another—fellowship and communion in the Lord's truth and love. We can only be brothers and sisters with one another in the highest and most spiritual sense by being brothers and sisters in Christ. We must dwell in Him. We must make earnest efforts so that the Divine idea of what each of us might be, as it dwells in His mind, may be discerned by us and realized in our outward lives.

That union with Christ by entering into which we become brothers and sisters with one another spiritually, is a mystical union. Still our Sacramental Feast involves with it the thought of a twofold union. Our natural bodies are nourished by the bread and wine, which in us are transformed, transubstantiated, into the Body and Blood of Christ, inasmuch as they help to build up these bodies of ours, which are temples of His spiritual presence, and unitedly are His own Mystical Body, the Church, the Visible Temple on earth of His own Divine Humanity.

But we have spiritual bodies as well as natural bodies. The temple of our body denotes a sanctuary within. The grand Temple of the Church denotes an indwelling Divine Presence. As our natural bodies are nourished by the bread and wine which contain within them a life which is from the Lord, so are our spiritual bodies nourished by the spiritual Body and Blood of the Lord. If of these we are not receptive, we have no life within us. That is, there can be within us no essential element of that fellowship and communion with the Invisible Church in which consists the eternal life we must enter upon now and abide in hereafter.

And this is the sacramentalism of our solemn rite. By means of the bread and wine, ordained to enable us to live the lower life of association with others in thought and toil, and destined also to become in us the very

Body and Blood of the Lord, we are helped to the discernment of the spiritual Flesh and Blood of Christ as offered to us to become our spiritual flesh and blood. This reverent discernment by us of the Lord's Body is essential for us. Otherwise we could not be nourished from His Life. Otherwise we could not receive His spiritual Flesh and Blood, and inwardly assimilate them. Otherwise His spiritual Body could not bestow on our spiritual bodies the elements of Divine Life. Our discerning the Lord's Body means our recognition of Him as He has ever dwelt in union with His Church, as the ages have coursed along, and as He still dwells in His Church in all spiritual realms of exaltation and usefulness. As we by bread and wine, when we accept them as gifts from the Lord filled with His own Life, are fitted to enter into fellowship of mutual service with those around us on earth, so are we by the Lord's spiritual Flesh and Blood enabled to enter into the eternal life of communion in truth and love with all dwellers in celestial realms, even with Angels and Arch-angels and all the company of Heaven, and with all, too, on earth whose spiritual life is with ours fed from the Lord, and to whom the Heavens are revealing as to ourselves the fullness of their glory.

"The rich banquet of His Flesh and Blood" is a spiritual feast that we as we dwell in union with Our Lord partake of with Himself in the Kingdom of God. There it is that He bestows upon us the living bread, the bread of life, the bread of His own Divine Life, the very excellence of His own nature which is Love. There it is that we drink with Him—such is our union with Him—of the fruit of the vine, of the true vine, the vine of Truth. There do we eat Angels' food, there does Our Lord nourish us with the Bread of everlasting love. There does He, as Eternal Wisdom, grant unto us to drink of the cup which He has mingled, and so enrich us with the Wine of His Truth. Thus nourished with the Bread of Life, thus strengthened with the new Wine of the Father's Kingdom,

Christ gathers us into union with His own Divine Humanity. He lifts us up into the heavenly places of that Humanity, with Himself and in Himself. He raises us into the eternal life—the life of the ages of progressive advancement. He fits us for the life of communion with all exalted souls in truth and love ; for that life which is His own Life diffused through all the members of His Mystical Body.

GOOD FRIDAY

IGNORANCE CONTRIBUTING TO THE CRUCIFIXION

BY THE VERY REVEREND GEORGE T. S. FARQUHAR, D.D.

I CORINTHIANS ii. 8.

“ Which none of the princes of this world knew.”

How wonderful are the capacities of the mind! In another place than our text St. Paul speaks of the possibility of its “ having all knowledge and of understanding all mysteries.” And truly, when the world had produced such intellects as those of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle before the Apostle’s time ; and, when he could also reflect upon such special inspiration being imparted as was given, for example, to Isaiah, it is no wonder that he was filled with admiration when he contemplated the vast range of man’s possible knowledge ! That, however, as I said, was in a different passage. In our text it is from the opposite point of view that he speaks. It is the ignorance of the human mind to which he here refers : “ None of the princes of this world knew,” he exclaims. And truly the possibilities of our ignorance, of our failing to comprehend the natures and relations of things are as great, if not greater, than those of our knowledge.

Now, since it is the case that men may be ignorant in this, that, or the other direction, it may very naturally occur to us to ask whether ignorance is culpable ; whether a person is to blame, or not, for being devoid of knowledge. And let us, to begin with, consider this

point somewhat in the abstract. What answer would the nature of the case seem to suggest ?

First, then, if there are any cases in which a piece of knowledge is either out of a person's reach, or does not come within the range of his duty to make himself familiar with, it really would appear that he cannot be held blameworthy for the ignorance in question. Obviously, if anyone happens to be ignorant of the distance from the earth of the fixed stars, he must not be held blameworthy if either that distance has hitherto been unascertainable, or if through not being an astronomer it has not been his duty to investigate the necessary facts. Similarly I claim not to be culpable for being ignorant of the intricacies of the Stock Exchange, on the ground that, being in Holy Orders, it has not been my duty to gain familiarity with that subject.

But if there be a case where a certain piece of knowledge is within some individual's reach and at the same time it has been his duty to make himself familiar with it, then we shall be justified in finding fault with that person for allowing himself to remain ignorant. Thus, if there were a medical man, who failed to keep himself abreast of the progress of the healing art according to his opportunities, his ignorance would be of a blameworthy character.

But there comes in now a somewhat serious consideration. Many people, indeed, lay the flattering unction to their souls that what has just been said about the culpability of ignorance is all that has to be said. They think that there is no more than that they, who are unable or are not called upon to gain certain knowledge, are free from blame, and that it is only they who can and ought to enlighten themselves, but who will not, that contract blameworthiness. That assertion, indeed, I admit is true, but it is not the only consideration which has to be attended to.

There is another, and it is this : Whether people are,

or are not, to blame for being ignorant, the inconveniences of being ignorant adhere to them in both cases alike. Mankind up till now, indeed, may justifiably maintain that no moral blame attaches to them for failing to deal successfully with that dreadful scourge, cancer, on the ground that they have done their best to discover the cure, but that it remains out of their reach. That is so, but then all the disadvantages of ignorance concerning this terrible disease continue to adhere to them. Any particular individual, too, may plead that he is not to be blamed for being ignorant of Italian, because it has never been his duty to study it. That is true, but then all the disadvantages of not knowing that beautiful language continue to adhere to him.

And children may not be to blame for ignorance of Christian morality, if they have been deprived of all opportunity of familiarizing themselves with it. That is true; but, all the same, the disadvantages, many and grievous, which follow from ignorance of Christian morality will adhere to them.

Having said so much, let us apply it to the actual case of Pontius Pilate—that "Prince of this world," of whom St. Paul was thinking in our text.

That he was ignorant of "the mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world"; that he was ignorant that the Prisoner Who stood before him was "the Lord of Glory," St. Paul clearly takes for granted. And indeed, it was impossible, without a miracle, that a man who had been brought up in Roman heathenism and whose duty it hardly was to make more than a superficial study of Jewish theology, even although he had been sent to be Procurator of Judea, should have comprehended the fact of the Incarnation. Ignorant, accordingly, he was.

But was he to blame for being ignorant? Even if a good case can be made out for considering that the Jewish Scribes and Doctors of the Law were to blame for their

ignorance ; and—though it is to be admitted that the Roman governor himself was to blame for another part of his conduct, namely for surrendering One Whom he had ascertained to be an innocent Man, to be crucified—was he to blame for not knowing that the Prisoner before him was the Lord of Glory ? St. Paul finds no fault with him for this, in our text. On the contrary he allows that in a certain way his ignorance provides some excuse for him. And, as we have seen, his ignorance had been brought about by the heathen upbringing of a lifetime and excusably enough continued after he became Procurator of Judea, and it follows naturally from these considerations that he was not to blame. As a man born and brought up a believer in “ gods many and lords many,” his acceptance of the Judean Procuratorship not having obviously laid on him the duty of exploring the inmost arcana of the Jewish Faith, the fact of his ignorance of the Person of Christ cannot justly be attributed to him as a sin.

This, however, is also certain that, whether he was to be blamed for his ignorance or was innocent with regard to it, that ignorance carried tragic results with it. If this “ Prince of this world ” had known the mystery of the Incarnation, St. Paul thinks well enough of him to say that “ he would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” But as a matter of fact he did not know, and the result of his ignorance was that “ he crucified the Lord of Glory ! ” He washed his hands, indeed, before the multitude, saying, “ I am innocent of the blood of this just Person ; see ye to it ! ” Nevertheless, after the people had cried out again, he, the judge, released a murderer unto them, and, when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified ! Yes, to be sure, he may not have been to blame for being ignorant concerning the Person of Christ, but, all the same, he was ignorant and his ignorance led to his committing an awful act, at which we still shudder after nineteen hundred years !

In the present day there are innumerable further instances in actual life of ignorance of Christ. There is, indeed, a great deal of knowledge of other kinds. Thanks to the tradition handed down from our forefathers, and developed by the present generation, no age has been so enlightened as our own—at least concerning matters which come within the range of material Science. But, as for knowledge of Christ, the ignorance is still terrible in all ranks of life and in all countries of the world. During the Great War chaplains at the front, while bearing witness to the prevalence of a certain natural religion amongst the men, were sorely perplexed by the widespread and profound ignorance and misconception of the Faith of Christ, which they encountered.

Just, therefore, as we have applied our opening remarks concerning the blameworthiness or innocence of ignorance to the particular instance of Pontius Pilate in his conduct towards Christ, so let us apply them now, though very briefly, to the cases of religious ignorance in the present day.

No doubt there are many who have not been the originators of their own ignorance. They have been brought up by careless parents, or parents who had themselves no knowledge of our holy religion; many, who never having learnt "the Truth as it is in Jesus" at that best of all places, their mother's knee, have been educated in schools and universities, where ignorance and secular prejudice have persistently screened "the Light of the World" from them. And there are many others, who, though some attempts were made to bring them up in a Christian atmosphere, yet had the Saviour presented to them in such false and inadequate aspects as to beget in them a distaste for the teaching which they accepted as His. Other similar experiences may have in other cases led to the same unfortunate result. Circumstances, over which people have had no control, have screened Christ from them, and they may never have understood it to be

their duty to prosecute further studies than those in which they have been already engaged ; and the outcome has been that they have remained ignorant of Christ. In these cases, the true Charity will be not to impute sinfulness to them for their being ignorant of Christ. Allowance must be made.

But cases of another kind are quite as numerous, if not more so. Such persons, unlike Pontius Pilate, have had ample opportunity of knowing and understanding "the mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world," even the Incarnation of His Eternal Son, and the great Redemption which He purchased for us with His own Blood. They have had opportunities of learning this "wisdom, which is from above," from pious parents and from faithful pastors and teachers and yet are to-day in painful ignorance. And why? Because they were slothful, and would not take the trouble to learn : because they were conceited, and disdained the lowliness of Christ ; because they were frivolous, and would not be troubled with serious things ; because they were worldly and ambitious, and the humility of Christ was distasteful to them ; because they were sensual, and the purity of Christ seemed insipid and impossible to them ; because they were puffed up with secular knowledge and scorned to receive wisdom by way of Revelation from the Word of God. And all they who, having had the opportunity of knowing Christ as the Lord of Glory, have only been prevented from receiving that knowledge through some sin on their part, are to blame for being ignorant.

But, while only one party is blameworthy for being ignorant of Christ, does only one suffer the results of ignorance? By no means. To be ignorant of Christ is still to be ignorant of Him, though we shall not be punished for the particular point of being ignorant of Him. And as all ignorance has had consequences, so also has ignorance of Our Saviour, however it is come by. We may

believe that God will not punish those African Chiefs, who had no opportunity of ever hearing about Our Lord, for the fact that they did not know Him. But yet, through never having heard of Him, they did not know Him, and this ignorance had deplorable consequences. Their kingdoms were scenes of indescribable superstition, lust, cruelty, mourning, lamentation, and woe ! And so it is not only with African Chiefs but with those amongst ourselves who are without Christ in the world. No doubt such people enjoy many unspeakable blessings from the Saviour, Whom they do not know, because He has been known by the other half of our population in our privileged island through many centuries. But, depend upon it, not only those amongst us who are to blame for not knowing Christ, but those also who are ignorant of Him but not to blame, nevertheless suffer loss from that sad ignorance. Oh what a loss, for instance, they suffer, when, in trying, as many of them do, to combat the taint which affects the nature of every man, they have to carry on that warfare, without understanding the truth of their own inward dispositions, or the supernatural means provided to help them ! Oh what a loss they suffer when, driven to face death, they have no knowledge of Christ and the power of His Resurrection to fall back upon for strength and comfort ! Oh what a loss they suffer when, harassed by the intricate and dark problems of this life, they are unaware of the health-giving Spirit Who is able to impart to them " the peace of God which passeth all understanding " !

Seeing, then, that even in cases in which, as has been explained, blameworthiness is not imputed for ignorance of Jesus the deplorable consequences of that ignorance still follow ; and, still more, seeing that in many and many an instance ignorance of Jesus has been due to sin and is therefore imputed as blameworthy, let us be very eager to escape from ignorance. Let us not, as the fashion of the day is, profess indifference as to religious knowledge,

but let us be constantly anxious to gain from the "Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation" a living knowledge of "the Truth as it is in Jesus."

EASTER EVEN

" HE DESCENDED INTO HELL "

BY THE REVEREND FRANCIS WILLIAM CHRISTIE, M.A.

I ST. PETER iii. 18, 19.

" Being put to death in the flesh," etc.

THE Holy Gospels illustrate in the clearest manner the perfect Manhood of the Son of God. The Eternal Word took to Himself not only a human Body but a human Spirit. In the Gospel we are permitted to witness this growth of both parts of His humanity. He was born a helpless infant and laid in a manger. Then we see Him increasing in stature and in wisdom, Body and Spirit pursuing their complete development. At last we behold Him arrived at full maturity of bodily and spiritual growth and endued with the fullness of the Holy Ghost go forth to His public ministry. And again we are permitted to see in His very labours and sufferings the perfection of His Manhood. He sits weary at the well's mouth. He lives by bread as we do, He sleeps in the fisherman's boat. His soul is moved by grief, disappointments, holy anger, exultation. In the Garden He experiences an agony of fear and is comforted by an Angel. And at last upon the Cross we see His Body pierced and bleeding and His Spirit crushed with the burden of the world's sin. And then He bows His Sacred Head and delivers up His Spirit into the Hands of His Father.

The Death of Jesus was to Him as to every man the sundering of Body and Spirit. What was the history of

that separated Body and Spirit between the hour of His Death and the hour of His Resurrection on Easter morning? The Apostles' Creed devotes two articles to the answering of this question. Of the Body of the Lord it says, “He was buried”; the Gospels tell us the whole pathetic and beautiful story. The bravery of Joseph of Arimathæa and of Nicodemus in claiming Jesus as their Friend and honouring His dead Body at the hour when everyone had forsaken Him. The funeral spices and the new tomb wherein never man before was laid. The women watching the entombment and seeing the great stone rolled against the entrance. “He was buried.” But what of the Human Spirit of Jesus—with all its faculties of intellect, with its keen emotions of love, compassion, and grief for human misery and sin? The Gospels are silent. It is the great leader of the Apostolic band, St. Peter, who many years afterwards in his First Epistle touches on the mystery. Only from the lips of the Risen Christ could he have learned it. The Spirit of Jesus separated by death goes forth on an errand of Power and Love.

“Put to death in the Flesh, but quickened in the Spirit, in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” These words throw a ray of light into the dark world of departed souls, and we are glad for them. Only from the lips of Christ Himself could St. Peter have learned of the hidden activities of the Soul of Christ between His Death and His Resurrection.

“Quickened in the Spirit.” These words imply far more than a mere survival of Christ's Human Spirit. So far as we can judge from outward appearances the spirits of ordinary men pass to the unseen world in a state of swoon or unconsciousness. The Spirit of the Redeemer on the contrary was stimulated to intenser life and energy from the moment of death. “He was quickened (i.e., made alive) in the Spirit.” Christ's Death was in one way the lowest depth of His humiliation. He tasted the penalty which has come into the world by sin. But in

the moment of death His Human Spirit is quickened and animated by a fresh gift of life, and starts on a Mission of Mercy to the spirits of the departed. "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." St. Peter singles out one particular class of these spirits, those who perished suddenly, though not unwarned, in the great judgment of the Flood. But it would be unwarrantable to assert that Our Lord's mission was confined to them. We may believe, without rebuke, that Our Lord's Mission of Mercy extended to untold myriads of myriads in the world of spirits. When we think of the long ages of man's existence in this world, ages without a written history, and when we try to imagine the vast multitude of human souls, all fashioned in God's image, that had passed into the unseen world before the coming of their Redeemer, we may cling to the hope that He went to them all, a Spirit among spirits, to illuminate their darkness and to fill them with hope. Even those who in the Flood died under the Hand of God for sin, are not excluded. "The Gospel," writes St. Peter, "was preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

We are thankful, when we look at the vast multitudes of human beings who even now die outside the circle of Christian light—we are thankful for the ray of hope that these words of Christ's Apostle shed upon their condition in the world of departed spirits. St. Peter's words harmonize well with the second word from the Cross, the promise to the penitent robber, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Upon the Cross Our Lord looked forward to a continuation of His Ministry to Mankind in this unseen world.

It is in the light of these passages of Holy Writ that we must understand the Article of the Apostles' Creed—"He descended into Hell." There is surely no one so ignorant as to suppose that the Creed teaches that Our Lord descended into the awful despair and misery of lost

souls? “Hell” in the Creed retains its ancient meaning. It means the hidden or covered place, or, as Bishop Horsley says, “the invisible mansions of the disembodied souls without any reference to sufferings.” “Hell” in the Creed is that “house appointed for all living” of which Job spoke. In that unseen world are conditions both of suffering and of comfort according to the characters of the departed. So Our Lord in His Parable of the rich man and Lazarus described, in figurative language, the impassable gulf which separated the one from the other, and the tremendous reversal of earthly conditions: the poor beggar in the place of honour seated next to Abraham at the banquet, and the rich man in flames of punishment, suffering for his selfish life on earth. Into this unseen world of departed souls came the Spirit of the Redeemer fresh from the awful battle of Calvary. He comes to announce to them first the tidings of His victory, and to make them sharers of His New Life. “He descended into Hell,” not as other men, but to exercise His kingly office. As by His Burial He has transformed the grave into a bed of hope for us, so by His descent into the unseen place of souls He has consecrated that condition also. A great teacher says: “Christ, in dying, shared to the full our lot. His Body was laid in the tomb. His Soul passed into that state on which we conceive that our souls shall enter. He has won for God, and hallowed every condition of human existence. We cannot be where He has not been.”

But the Redeemer has not merely shared our lot. He has changed it. The dying Christian no longer looks forward, as even the holy men of the Old Covenant did, with feelings of horror and aversion to that mysterious world. The Light of Christ’s Countenance shines there now. The pious Jew might describe the place of rest which he hoped to attain as Abraham’s Bosom. The Apostle of Christ desires to depart and to be with Christ. We think of the Christian departed now as resting,

whether near or far off, somewhere within the Light of the Sun of Righteousness :|| advancing in knowledge and purity and joy, and moving upward and inward to higher mansions in the House of God. Let us unite ourselves to that company in prayer. They are not severed from us, nor we from them :

“ Still with us beyond the veil
Praising, pleading, without fail.

With them still our hearts we raise,
Share their work and join their praise.”

EASTER DAY

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

BY THE REVEREND H. G. BONAVIA-HUNT, MUS.D.

ST. LUKE xxiv. 2.

“ They found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.”

IN many of the ancient tombs, including that of Joseph of Arimathæa, in which the Body of Our Lord was laid for a time, there was a doorway which was covered by a circular stone in shape like a millstone, which stood edge-wise and was rolled athwart the doorway in a groove ; this groove sloped downwards to the door so that the touch of a child almost might be sufficient to send the stone rolling down to the mouth of the grave or tomb, whereas it would take the strength of two or three men to roll it back and upward from the mouth of the grave.

When in the early morning the faithful women went forth with spices to embalm (as they supposed) the Body of our Lord, they seem to have had no thought of any obstacle to the performance of their pious intention ; it was only as they drew near to the holy sepulchre that it suddenly occurred to them that they could not, by their own feeble strength, move that tremendous millstone. They said, “ Who shall roll the stone away from the sepulchre ? ” Now, they evidently were unaware that there were any guards placed over against the sepulchre to

prevent the Body from being taken away, but perhaps as they went on they thought, "surely some of the Twelve Apostles will be there and we can get their help in moving the stone."

They did not go back : they went forward ; they went forward in faith, to carry out their tender and affectionate design of doing honour to the Body of the Lord ; and when they came they found the stone had been rolled away, rolled back from the mouth of the sepulchre, and, therefore, the difficulty was at an end. They hastened in and they found that the Body had gone ; they saw a vision of Angels who said that He had risen and had gone before them to meet His disciples.

Is not this a parable for us Christians ?—for us, who have had doubts cast upon the great fact of the Resurrection of Our Lord, which is itself an earnest and pledge of the resurrection of all those that belong to the Lord ? These women had a millstone of anxiety pressing upon their hearts as they went upon their way to the sepulchre, and they found that in going the difficulty was removed. If they had turned back they would not have known the joy that greeted them when they arrived and found the stone rolled away. Is not this, I say, a parable for us upon whom many ages of belief and unbelief have rested, which we have inherited from our forefathers, faithful and unfaithful—this millstone of difficulty about the Resurrection of Our Lord ? We are constantly being told that it is contrary and out of the course of Nature, that no such thing could happen.

My brethren, if there had been nothing else happen in the history of mankind that appeared quite contrary to the course of Nature, there would have been the shadow of a case perhaps for the doubt that our Lord had risen and the stone had been rolled away ; but so many things have happened in history and so many things are happening now which appear out of the course of Nature, that we should be indeed infatuated and superstitious if we refused

to believe in the Resurrection of so wonderful a Person as Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is no excuse for him who has the childlike heart ; in fact, it wants no effort : out of the fullness of his heart he believes that with God all things are possible ; and this one great event, round which the whole circle of Divine design is moving, is that event which we celebrate with joy this morning, because we know it is a fact, and not only a fact but a significant fact, because it is the trumpet call for us to awaken out of our own sleep of spiritual death and to arise with Our Lord into that life of immortality, which He and He alone has brought to us.

Yes, dear friends, this is not the occasion for anything like a systematic and detailed discourse on the subject of the Resurrection. When our hearts are full we cannot go into theological arguments ; when we feel the life within us we need no demonstration as to its existence ; we live and, therefore, we hope, and the millstone of despair which hung so heavy over the hearts of the ancients, all that has been rolled away from the sepulchre of human despair and now we rejoice in the light and the hope of the life everlasting, which Our Lord Himself brought to us from the very depths of the grave. Well then, we think of our friends, those who once were with us and moved and lived and loved amongst us, as Christ Himself lived and moved and loved amongst that little circle He called His friends, we remember them specially to-day ; we remember their faces ; we remember the light in their eyes which we cannot think has gone out for ever ; and now we know by the pledge of to-day, by the fact of our Risen Lord being amongst us, that they who lived and loved amongst us are living and loving still and are moving in those higher spheres, in those gardens of rest where Our Lord Himself rested until the Third Day.

And those women. Surely at the thought of them some of us strong-minded people must be ashamed of ourselves as we compare the likelihood of what we should have done

in these circumstances with what they did in their simple faith and trust ; they went not back when the difficulty was presented to their minds ; they still walked on, and they trusted in Providence that something would be done in order to remove that stumbling-block, and they found there the millstone rolled away. Our Lord once said, " If a man hath faith as a grain of mustard seed and will say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done." I wonder if anybody has taken Him at His word, if they have that real faith and try to remove some mountain of difficulty in the way ? My brethren, the Faith of Christ is equal to the removal of any millstone, and if we will go forth trusting that He will help us when the right time comes, if we will trust in His Love and His Power, we shall find, as that millstone was glorified by the light of the Angel that sat upon it, so it will be with every difficulty that threatens to stand in the path of the Christian ; let us go on in faith and we shall find a messenger from Heaven not only to roll it away but to glorify it.

Then I look forward in the Revelation to that other Angel who, with the Voice and Hand of God, lifted up the great millstone, that hangs so heavy on the hearts of men, and cast it with a mighty cast into the depths of the unfathomable sea ; so to all faithful souls who recite together " I believe in the Resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting," so shall the millstones of difficulty disappear in the depths of the sea which itself shall give up its dead.

" Soon shall come the great awaking,
Soon the rending of the tomb,
Then the scattering of all shadows
And the end of toil and gloom."

So you who have come, and you who are yet to come to the Table of your Risen Lord, remember, as you feed upon Himself, that you are taking into yourself the power

of the Resurrection, and the stone that lay so heavy at the door of your heart shall for ever be rolled away and you shall then meet your Lord soul to soul, body to body, face to face.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

MEN OF THE BURNING HEART

BY THE REVEREND ANDREW AITKEN

ST. LUKE xxiv. 32.

“ Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? ”

THIS is the story of the men with the burning heart and how they got it. It is the story of a double pilgrimage. There is the earthly journey these two men took from Jerusalem to Emmaus in the late afternoon of the first Easter Day—a journey that began in the glory of that Sunday afternoon and ended as the darkness of the night fell upon them. And there is that other journey these men took at the same time—a spiritual journey that began with the fears, the glooms, and the broken hopes of Calvary and the tomb where the Body of their loved Lord had been laid to rest, and their confidence that He would have redeemed Israel died within them—a pilgrimage that ended in a face-to-face conversation with that same Lord now risen and the passing away of those glooms and fears before new joys and hopes that flooded their souls with light as the dawn floods the night-clad earth with the glory of the day.

That spiritual change took place within them as they walked and talked with the Stranger Who joined them on the way and showed them from the Scriptures that everything that had happened up in the city of Jerusalem was in perfect harmony with the Word and

Will of God. As they talked, somehow their burdens were lightened, their fears melted away, and when they reached Emmaus, they had recovered themselves. The three of them entered the house and sat down to supper together, and even as they ate, the two disciples knew their Stranger-Companion by the way to be the very Christ they had loved and lost. As they looked on Him, He left them, and they saw Him no more at that time ; and it was then that they looked on one another and said : " Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way . . . ? "

This is the story of the men with the burning heart and how they got it. It is the story of these two men, and of all the other disciples and Apostles who came into contact with Christ in His resurrection-life among men. And I am trying to tell it to-day because it might be, it should be, your story and mine.

Men of the Burning Heart—what exactly does that mean ? The story of these men and their fellows will enlighten us. They are changed men—before the Risen Christ met them, they were weak and full of fears ; now they are strong and of a good heart. Before, they had a faith that faltered and lost its way ; now, their faith laughs at difficulties, and, hard though their pilgrim path was to be, they never lost it again. They are changed men—you hardly know them for the same men. Go with these two back to Jerusalem to the upper room, and go with them and the others on the journeys and through the duties that filled the rest of their lives and you find in them a love that never sought its own, a service that refused to grow despondent for so much as a moment, a joy of soul that made their very faces shine with the wonder of it, and a strong-hearted endurance that made them choose martyrdom rather than be disloyal to their Lord. That is what these men of the burning heart *are*. *That* is their story, a well-known story, but is it no more than a story ?—no more than the record of a glorious day in the chronicles

of the Church of Christ? Surely it is more: it is the pledge and prophecy of similar miracles of uplifting and recreating grace throughout the ages wherever and whenever Christ meets and talks with men. It is set down here that we men and women of a later age, nerveless, dispirited, and haunted by many fears and faithless feelings, may know how to get quit of these evil things and enter into a new way of living, the only way that is worth while. If we suffer from these things, if our individual lives are nerveless and ineffective, if the army of the living God is working a pitifully small deliverance on the earth, if there are few conversions of sinners into saints and enemies into friends, let us understand the cause of it all right away: and that cause is that the burning heart is not ours, and we are not talking or walking with Christ as we should. The endowment of the burning heart was Christ's great gift to the men and women He loved long, long ago; and it is His gift to-day. We can have it now as we wait around Christ and worship and listen, and we can go forth from this house of God with an energy that will make us sufficient for the battles of life and a joy that no man can take away.

This burning heart is the grand secret of sympathy. Jesus had it in full measure. From His Galilee ministry rings out one clear note whose music the world will never forget: "Comfort ye, My people." And His Hands were laid on the broken and the fevered in healing wherever He passed. Pity burned in His heart like a flame and His words and works were the channels through which it ran in glowing tides into a world of sorrow and sin. Only as we have such a heart can we enter into the sorrows of others and be to them the Comforter Christ was to us in our own need. Only by its possession can we see the need of the world and hope to help and heal it.

This burning heart is the secret of Progress. You can see this every day. From the orator at the street-corner to the man who stands in Parliament, he who moves the

heart of the world is the man of glowing heart. No matter what a man may preach or proclaim, if he only gives his audience the feeling that he is in dead earnest, that his whole heart is in his message, he will get men to listen to him, he will win converts to his cause. That is how these men of Emmaus behaved; that is how the Apostles generally acted. Look at them before and after their meeting with the Risen Christ. Then they were disappointing, slow of heart to believe, and easily dismayed by opposition; afterwards, they were possessed by the truth and valiant for it; it dominates their souls, they speak it in trumpet tones, it passes from them to convict and conquer others. That is what we need, and that is what we can have. The vision they had is ours—the vision of a wider Kingdom in the world, of a stronger Church in our own land, and a worthier faith in our own lives. And the same Christ is ours to lead and quicken so that our very words will be battles and our deeds will be triumphs. And we have the same great message of a Christ Who redeems and makes all things new.

This is the secret of Power. The Christian Church is often accused of being a weak poor thing, of being a spent force in the affairs of men. It is too true a charge, and we who make the Church are responsible for the fact. We have pursued a wrong ideal of saintship; we have made it a thing without force; we have looked on it as something quiet, meek, placid, a little delicate, and just a little sad. These qualities are in the picture, but they should not be the main elements in it. Turn to the Gospels and you will find that Jesus loved men of energy. John the Baptist, Peter, Zacchæus, Simon the Zealot—take these as types of the forceful and eager spirits Jesus gathered around Him. And look at the vehemence, uncompromising and ardent, in them all after His Resurrection. And look further at the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. There was the friend at midnight who hammered and hammered at the door till he got his

loaves ; and there was the story of the importunate widow who would not hold her tongue, but stuck to her job of begging till she got what she wanted. From these and other stories we are safe to say that Jesus would have neither part nor lot with men who had no enthusiasm. Do we take our religion as seriously as all that ? Do we take it as seriously as it deserves ? The foolish virgins in Christ's story were condemned just because they were slack. You sometimes hear it said of some man or woman that "He is mad about temperance," or "She is a crank about Foreign Mission work." Well now, these are the folk Jesus can do something with, for they have the burning heart.

The question remains—How can we get this burning heart ? You have seen on a wintry morning how the window would be covered with frost. It was a picture of rare beauty, but it made the window cold and dead, and the life of the room was lost. The child tries to remove it with a knife ; but he finds that scraping is a slow business, and very unsatisfactory, for the frost keeps coming as fast as it is removed. Or he blows on the glass, but that too is a failure. Then the fire is kindled and the room grows warmer, and the pictures on the window disappear and life becomes bright again.

That was how the burning heart came to these men of the story, and that is how it comes to us.

It was kindled by the talk of Jesus. There was nothing startling, nothing new in His talk. He talked about the Old Testament and that was a book they knew. He simply refreshed their minds ; He made the old things new, and the dark things plain ; that was all ; and He does the same to-day. When He meets a man, He makes everything new ; the things he has known from boyhood, the things of sin, of forgiveness, of pain and peace, of death and life—He sets all these things in a new clear light, and the heart begins to burn, and love to awaken within the man.

But the most potent force is just Christ Himself. It was the living Christ Who made the words living to these men and made their hearts glow. If you want life at its best, you must feel the glow of a new love, the challenge of a new life. And Christ gives both. You will never reach greatness by mere duty. Duty is a thing you can measure ; it has its beginnings and its end. Calvary was more than a duty, it was a spirit ; and when the spirit of the Crucified is in a man, he really lives. When you know and can say, " Jesus lived and died for me," the fire is kindled in your heart and soon it will begin to glow.

What is our spirit ? Ice or fire ?

The road to Emmaus from Jerusalem—where is it ? It is your way home to-day. Listen. Jesus is with you. And He speaks. His Hand is on yours. Let His Spirit become yours.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS HENRY STOKOE, D.D.

I CORINTHIANS xv. 29.

"Now is Christ risen from the dead."

THE prominence given by the Apostles to the fact of their Master's Resurrection in their earliest preaching, is natural and intelligible. If they were to gain a hearing at all, if they were to make any converts to the new Faith, it was absolutely necessary that this reversal of the seemingly ignominious end of the Prophet of Nazareth should be at once established beyond question. The truth that "he conquers who endures"—the triumph of suffering, the glory of the Cross—was to be revealed later. Had this been proclaimed first and alone, it would have been too rude a shock to the ideas and prejudices of the age and nation; and nothing, humanly speaking, could then have removed the impression of failure produced by the sight of Him Who had taught "with authority"—Whom the multitudes would have taken by force, and made a king—at last circumvented by His enemies, and crucified with the malefactors. It was left for Christianity to win the admiration and reverence of mankind for "the noble army of martyrs," whose claim was simply that they proved their devotion by the sacrifice of their lives. There was a different type of this heroism under the Old Dispensation. Those "of whom the world was not worthy," those who

were regarded as the national leaders and benefactors, were rather they "who through faith subdued kingdoms, and wrought righteousness," and effected great deliverances. Round the vision of "the King in His beauty" itself, round the promised Messiah, there had gathered a halo of earthly success, which had altogether obscured the parallel picture of the Man of suffering and sorrows. It was a new light even to disciples, when the Scriptures were expounded as showing that Christ must first suffer, and then enter into His glory.

And so it was quite natural that all the first teaching should centre in this truth. This is the reason why the historical order of events is reversed in the Apostolic preaching, and we find prominence given first to the Resurrection, then to the Atonement, and lastly to the Incarnation. While the discourses, which gathered together the nucleus of a Church, and in which St. Peter was the chief spokesman, proclaimed the fact that the Lord was risen, triumphant over death and the grave, it was next St. Paul's special mission to "know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"; and it was reserved for St. John to draw out, in its fullness, the truth that He Who humbled Himself even to the death upon the Cross, and then was highly exalted, was the Incarnate Son of God. And yet, while each of the three leading teachers has thus his peculiar work, and the three together present to us the whole plan of Redemption, it is clear that they all regard the three doctrines as inseparable. St. Peter first enforces the Resurrection, because without this the Incarnation and the Atonement would seem incredible—for without this proof of power how could One, Whose career ended with the death of shame, be honoured as Son of God? Or without this what guarantee was there that the Crucifixion of Christ was any more a vicarious sacrifice than that of others who have been unjustly condemned and executed? St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, gives us that which is, perhaps, the most moving of all pictures

of the Incarnation : the story of Him, Who, being in the form of God, emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And it is to him we are indebted for the most complete and forcible argument for a general Resurrection, of which the Risen Lord was the First-fruits, in his First Epistle to the Church at Corinth.

St. John, while he makes belief in that truth set forth in the preface to his Gospel, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, the crucial test of discipleship, does not omit to tell how He, in Whom the predictions were fulfilled, "A bone of Him shall not be broken," and "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced," was "the propitiation for our sins"; and he adds to other testimony for the reality of the Risen Christ, the valuable record of the interview with the doubting disciple, and the scene on the sea of Tiberias.

It has been suggested by Bishop Westcott that these three types of Apostolic theology may have their counterparts in three successive ages of the Church which is erected on the foundation of their combined teaching. That of St. Peter, in which the miraculous power of Christianity—as evidenced above all in its crowning miracle—is the article of a standing or a falling Church, was in accord with the spirit of the pre-Reformation period. In the reaction from the abuses which were the unnatural outcome of this championship of the Faith, special prominence has been given to the central truth of the Pauline system : the justification of men through the efficacy of the Atonement, without merit or legal righteousness of his own. And then there may still remain a third epoch, in which the doctrine of the Incarnation, the special teaching of St. John the Theologian, will be that on which each Christian must take his stand. Certainly the gathering of the storm of controversy in our own day, around the Sacred Person of Him, Whose Divinity the beloved Disciple proclaims with a peculiar insistence of his own, and the

consequent selection of *his* Gospel as the battlefield on which we are to meet our foes, would seem to favour such a forecast of severe and lasting struggle.

But it is to the first of these inter-dependent truths that our thoughts naturally turn at this season. Let me ask you to observe how resolutely, yet how soberly—may I not say, how logically?—St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost puts forward the cardinal truth, of which he is to be the chief exponent. Surely it is not the language of fanaticism which briefly yet deliberately traces the progress of the Prophet of Nazareth to the bitter Cross, and then, showing how His release from the bands of death was foretold in the cherished writings of the nation, winds up with the simple assertion of the fact of His Resurrection and of the readiness of all to testify to this? And nothing could shake this resolve. Nor is, I think, the form in which the truth was at first presented without its significance.

The Psalmist's words referred, St. Peter tells us, to the Resurrection of *Christ*, but the identity of this Anointed One with Him, Whose unprecedented ministry of love and power, and Whose startling end were so recent and so notorious, must first be established. And the hearers are not as yet prepared to accept the revelation of an inherent vitality, by which this miracle had been produced. It must be described, as in the prophecy which has just been quoted, as due to the immediate Agency of God. And so the truth, which afterwards becomes, as stated by St. Paul in the passage before us—"Now is Christ risen from the dead"—re-echoing the first joyful message published among those who were already disciples, "The Lord is risen indeed," is thus described to the yet unconverted, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

There is a so-called "Christianity" in the present day, which seeks to dispense with this, as with all that is supernatural in the records of the New Testament, and

would have us rest content with the beauty of our Lord's life as the Example of perfect humanity, and the power of His teaching as far surpassing that of any other ethical system. Is it possible to accept such a compromise between faith and unbelief? How can we, on any such hypothesis, justify the confident assertion of St. Peter, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses"? or the emphatic statement of St. Paul, "Now is Christ risen from the dead"? Can we conceive, with this before us, that the conviction, which it is no exaggeration to say inaugurated a new era in the history of thought, of philosophy, of morality, was due—as M. Renan has declared—to the illusion of a crazed Magdalene, or that the Resurrection was "partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true," or thus accepted because it was in harmony with the notions of an age which was full of mysticism, of a nation whose imagination had been for centuries fed on a belief in the miraculous?

My brethren, there is no other alternative. Either the Apostles' words are literally true, the very foundation stone of all our hope and faith, and Christ *is* risen from the dead—or else they were dupes or deceivers, and the whole fabric of the Christianity which we have been taught, and have believed and trusted, falls into ruins. And then are borne in upon each struggling, sorrowing soul, in all their dreariness, those crushing words of St. Paul, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

And this confident preaching of the Resurrection, as the lever which is to move the world, while it is a testimony which cannot be invalidated on any fair canons of criticism, to the great fact of Easter, is hardly less important as bearing upon the gift of that spiritual discernment which we shall commemorate at Whitsuntide. How else are we to account for the wonderful transformation which has passed over the disciples during the fifty days which have then elapsed since they first heard of, or saw,

the Risen Lord, or even during the ten days since His Ascension? They, who at first were bewildered, though rejoicing, who seem to have regarded the Resurrection as affecting their Master alone, who were so far from anticipating the great work of evangelization before them that they had returned to their old homes, to their old occupations; or who, at best, were still dreaming of national restoration and earthly sovereignty, and showed, in the very last scene, that they clung to the old Messianic misconception of an earthly kingdom—these have now thrown aside for ever all such illusions, and are impressed with a sense of their mission as Apostles of a new religion. What a change of attitude, when those who were so lately assembled with doors shut, “for fear of the Jews,” come forward in the strength of the Pentecostal shower as the bold champions of a truth which they know will evoke the bitterest antagonism, which will array against them a host of prejudices, of vested interests, of time-honoured beliefs, and, in proof of their testimony to the one fact that “Christ is risen,” are “faithful unto death.”

To the truth, my brethren, which they so confidently proclaimed, let us cling; proof alike against all the fierce invectives of those who denounce it as a monstrous superstition; and to the plausible, compromising of those who would give it a merely subjective bearing. Is it, let us ask, reconcilable with *any* belief in Jesus Christ as One Who came to bear witness to the truth—even if such belief were no more than reverence for Him, as the wisest of Teachers, the noblest of *men*—to suppose that His own predictions of this were to be falsified? Is it conceivable that it was an illusion, or an imposture, or an unreal and mystical utterance, when, not on one occasion alone, He added to the prophecy of His sufferings—which without doubt was exactly fulfilled—the declaration that on the third day He should be raised again?

It is the literal fulfilment of these words, the fact which the Apostles confidently assert, and no theory of

the development of the critical faculty, no talk about the enthusiasm of a superstitious age can really shake their testimony. The event was, without doubt, startling to them, however clearly foretold, because at variance with all their preconceptions. Whatever difficulties it may present to some now, it cannot be explained away without giving rise to greater difficulties still. Without it, "our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain—ye are yet in your sins."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

RESURRECTION FROM AMONG THE DEAD

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS SAUNDERS EVANS, D.D.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10, 11.

“ That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection,”
etc.

JUST before the dawn of the day of salvation the blackness of darkness lay thick upon the nations. A century or less before the Resurrection of Christ a Roman orator, the most famous of his age, made a speech in which he expressed himself to this effect : “ Death is to every man the end of all things : beyond it is nothing, neither sorrow nor pleasure ; neither weal nor woe ; neither life nor consciousness.” About the same period a Roman poet, one of the best of that age, spoke in a like mournful strain : “ The sun can set and the sun can rise again ; but when our brief day of light is spent, there comes to us a night without a star, without a morning, a sleep that knows no waking.”

Most dreary two thousand years ago to the mass of mankind was the prospect of the future. They indeed sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. But to us how radiantly has the outlook brightened ! The gloom of the grave, once an impenetrable gloom of despair, has been transfigured into a cloud of hope, a cloud with a silver lining, a cloud beyond which a bright light shineth.

To us there is a Risen Saviour ; for He Who with His own will was nailed to the Cross, did by His own power break the bands of death. The dissolution of body and soul in

His person, was the antecedent condition necessary to His Resurrection in the body. We might indeed conceive that, His soul being free from the infection of sin and His body from the corruption of decay, the Lord could have ascended to Heaven without dying. But, in that case, what, we may ask, would have become of us and of our salvation? It was in order to deliver us from the clutch and grasp of death that He both died and rose again. Therefore the gates of hell, that they might not prevail against the Church, were not to be burst open from without but to be unbarred from within. The Conqueror of the fell tyrant must first become the fell tyrant's Prisoner. He must Himself descend, for a brief space, into the dungeons of darkness, vanquish in his own domain the last enemy that is to be subdued, wrest from his hands the keys of Hades, undo the bars of the prison-house, and unchain the captives. That is what the Captain of our salvation did. From within to without was ever the method of His procedure.

The Apostle speaks in the text of "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings" and "the power of His Resurrection." He puts the two together. The doctrine of the Resurrection is one of the main pillars of Christianity, even as the Crucifixion may be said to be the other. From these two mighty piers springs the arch of life that spans the gorge of death and makes the bridge that leads from earth to Heaven. There is a connexion, which can never be broken, between the Agony and the Victory, between the conflict of the Cross and the conquest of the grave. These two things—the mystery of dying Love and the mystery of Divine Power—may be thought of successively, even as they were wrought successively. Yet in the application of their spiritual benefits to ourselves on this side of eternity they are inseparable. They constitute one redeeming act, and are ever blended together in one baptism into Christ.

There is the power of Christ's Crucifixion and the

power of His Resurrection, both together working in us through His Divine Humanity by the appliances of the Holy Ghost. These two powers, as they co-operate in us, touching our hearts and reaching our lives, are in their effects exact measures of each other. By baptism into Christ we die unto sin and rise again unto life; we "eschew those things that are contrary to our profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same." If, by the infused virtue of Christ crucified in that body which bare the sin of the world, we are striving in the spirit ourselves to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, precisely in the same degree are we rising to a life of active obedience. Hence, in the Church Catechism, "A death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness" is the twofold answer to the simple question—"What is the inward and spiritual grace in baptism?" The death and the life, the negative and the positive, both advance with equal pace. They are poles. They are complementary halves. They can no more be divorced from each other than in Christ's personal history His exaltation can be severed from His humiliation, or the Resurrection from the Crucifixion.

Since, then, there is a secret bond of union between the bodily Resurrection of Christ and our own spiritual renovation, it appears that we may in some degree test our measure of progress in the hope of a blessed resurrection hereafter by our measure of progress here in the life of obedience. As we mortify our members which are upon the earth, as we put a bridle on lawless desires, eschew sensual pleasures, lying lips, a malicious tongue, wicked tempers—in the same degree we are opening our hearts to the influx of the Divine graces of purity, of temperance, of truthfulness, of gentleness, of active charity; and, I may add, precisely in the same degree are we enlarging our hope that, like St. Paul, we too may eventually attain to the resurrection of those that are Christ's.

I have thus briefly drawn your attention to this

mysterious relation between our spiritual renovation here and our physical resurrection hereafter, and between both of these and Christ's bodily Resurrection, by virtue of which alone we are now quickened and shall hereafter be in due time raised and transfigured in body, soul, and spirit, because the text we are now discussing, rightly interpreted in its own light and in the light of other Scriptures, suggests to us all a powerful motive to renewed exertion in the great business of working out our own salvation.

In the text St. Paul expresses his desire to come to the knowledge of Christ and the power of His Resurrection: "if by any means," he adds, "I may attain to the resurrection of the dead." Such language seems strange. The idea that St. Paul, himself declared to be a chosen vessel of God, commissioned in a miracle by the audible voice of Jesus to be an Apostle of the Gentiles, himself a writer of such Epistles, a founder of such Churches—that he, of all men, should seem to question his own final attainment to the resurrection of the dead! The idea that he who was inspired to utter the universal dictum: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," should appear to doubt whether he himself should ever be quickened from the dead! Here is a mystery.

Yet it is not a mystery without a solution. I do not presume to solve it, but I venture to offer a possible or an approximate solution. A close examination of the original Greek leads to the conclusion that a much better translation is: "If by any means I may attain to that resurrection which takes place from among the dead." What does such a version imply? It implies that the resurrection to which the Apostle humbly hopes to attain is one in which some only, and they apparently the few, will partake, while others, and they apparently the many, will be no participators in it.

If this interpretation be true, and I venture to think it must be so, we are entitled to conclude that at the grand crisis to which the Apostle alludes, the Second Advent of

our Lord in Glory, there will be a resurrection only of the Saints who have fallen asleep, as there will be also a transfiguration of the Saints who are alive upon the earth at the time of that great event.

Evidently St. Paul had this thought in his mind, when he wrote to the Corinthians : “ As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ” ; not all men at the same time nor in the same degree, for he adds “ every man in his own order.” What is the meaning of the word “ order ” ? It is a military term—every man in his own division or battalion of the saintly army. This passage clearly intimates that there will be a sequence of divisions, a series of battalions, in the innumerable hosts of the resurrection.

“ Every man,” saith the Apostle, “ in his own division : Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming.” But what of them that are not Christ’s ? And yet they too must sometime rise, at the sound of the last trump.

It is evident, I think, that this resurrection from among the dead of which St. Paul here speaks and hopes to attain to consists of those who are eminently Christ’s at His coming, and of those only. And is not this distinctive doctrine fully borne out and expanded by the subsequent testimony of St. John in the Revelation : “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power ” ? That the second death has no power on the saints of the first resurrection is evident from this passage ; and that the second death has no power on the partakers of the second resurrection is equally evident ; but whether the second death has power on *all* who shall belong to the second resurrection—that is not revealed nor is it certain. It appears rather from the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew that at the general resurrection, of the heathen principally, which will take place we know not *how* long after, there will be two classes, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the

lost, the blessed of the Father and the workers of iniquity. Furthermore, it seems not improbable from other texts of Scripture that they of the first or special resurrection (princes they are described and as reigning with Christ) shall judge or govern them of the second resurrection; so that the latter shall be subjects of the former.

Let me conclude by drawing your thoughts to the resurrection from amongst the dead according to St. Paul, the first resurrection according to St. John, as a doctrine of a practical tendency. I do this because it seems to me to furnish a hallowed incentive to activity in good works. Our salvation is of Christ. There is none other name given under Heaven by which we can be saved, but His name only. But still there are degrees of salvation and there are orders in the resurrection, every man in his own order and in his own degree. The ladder of salvation is of Christ's own planting. Nay, He Who planted the ladder is Himself the ladder which He planted. But the number of the steps of that ladder by which we ascend Heavenwards is of our own choosing. We may by diligence in making our calling and election sure ascend so high as to reach the first resurrection, or we may by indifference or sloth fail of that and attain only to the second resurrection, indicated by St. Paul and elucidated by St. John. For this reason it is that the text, properly considered, operates as a spiritual stimulus to a heavenly ambition. It engenders and perpetuates a holy rivalry, by repentance ever renewed, by faith, by prayer, by self-control never flagging, by daily duties faithfully performed in order that in the day of sifting the great Judge may deem even us worthy of enrolment in the first division of the great army of the resurrection, and if of enrolment, then of enthronement also in the everlasting Kingdom, unto which "many are called but few are chosen."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

GOOD AND PERFECT GIFTS

BY THE REVEREND FREDERICK ARTHUR CLARKE, M.A.

ST. JAMES i. 17.

“ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

ST. JAMES here tells us that in God, Who is the giver of all good gifts, there is no fickleness or changeableness, no variableness neither shadow of turning. He means very much the same as St. Paul does, when he says that “ the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” That is, God does not repent of His mercies and blessings ; He does not take back His gifts ; He is a fountain of blessing and goodness which never runs dry, and never really changes its course. *We* indeed may refuse and often do refuse the gifts which He offers us ; we despise and close our ear against His teaching ; we neglect opportunities of growing better, and so we lose them altogether. With us there is a great deal of variableness and changeableness ; we try to do what is right and then we fall away, we are not in the same mind for two days together. And so God, if He would lead us and draw us to Himself, has to use different methods at different times. Often He takes away what we thought was a blessing, in order to teach us to desire and press forward to a higher blessing ; often He takes from us something which has been a help to us, lest we should trust too much to this help, and come to depend upon it altogether. But this does not show any

variableness or change in God ; it shows that He has one great purpose—to sanctify and bless us ; He is leading us and teaching us by a plan which we cannot always understand, but which is certainly the best for us ; He goes forward, without variableness or shadow of turning, pouring His benefits upon us, giving us at every time whatever is best able to lead us to Him, whether it be joy or sorrow, success or failure.

And therefore, as St. James says, we ought all to be “ swift to hear ” ; eager to listen for the guidance of God ; we ought to wait upon the Lord ; to be attentive to all His teaching, to look for His help and counsel in all that happens to us, so that we may not miss the special blessing, the special lesson or gift which by His grace we may get out of everything.

We can see this truth very plainly and clearly in the history of the Jews, as we read it in the Bible. St. Paul tells us that God did not repent of, or take back, the covenant and promise He made to Abraham. The Law of Moses did not set it aside ; the Law was only the way in which the promise was brought about. And so again with the Law itself, which lasted until Christ came. When Christ came, the Law was not given up, as a method of saving mankind which had been tried and had failed. Our Saviour did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. The Law was not thrown aside as a tool which had been tried and been found useless, but rather as scaffolding which had done its work. It was a school-master to bring men to Christ ; and when Christ was come, it had no more to do.

In the same way we can see how all that happened to the Jews—their sojourn in Egypt, their wanderings, their captivity, the teaching of the Prophets—all was intended to prepare their hearts, and teach them at last to receive their true King when He should come in the name of the Lord. It is true that when He came to His own, His own received Him not ; yet this was because of the

hardness of their hearts, and not from any want of preparation. There was nothing that could have been done to the vineyard which God had not done; yet when He looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.

Yet there were those who received their Lord at His coming, with love and humble joy. They had followed Him and hung upon His words for three happy years; for a time they had mourned His loss, when the waters of death closed over Him; but on the first Easter Day He had come back from the grave to comfort and cheer them. But they might not keep Him with them long. The forty days are nearly over; the time is at hand when He is to be parted from them. Jesus Christ Himself has finished the work which His Father had given Him to do upon earth, and God has yet another gift in store for His faithful people. God does not turn back on the path of blessing; He does not give up His work of mercy and love; there is no fickleness in Him, no weariness in well-doing; no variableness or shadow of turning.

And yet it must almost have seemed to the Apostles that God was repenting of His work of blessing, was taking back His gifts. "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me." Those were their Master's words. Was it so then? Was God taking back to Himself, taking away from the world, His greatest and best gift? Had God forgotten to be gracious? Had it repented Him that He had given His only-begotten Son to mankind? No; that could not be so. And hear the words of Our Saviour to His disciples: "It is expedient for you that I go away." God has something more wonderful to give His children: something better than even the bodily presence of Christ. God was purposing to give to them and to us the good, the perfect gift of Himself, to give His own Blessed Spirit to come and dwell in our hearts. If He took away God *with* us, it was to give us God *in* us; nay, He was not really taking away His Son from us, but only giving Him to us in a higher and

more perfect way. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ ; and it is Christ Who says, " I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come unto you " ; and " behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

And so, this time in which the Church is glorying in her Lord's victory over the grave, and rejoicing in the light that on Easter Day shone out of the darkness of death—this is also a time of preparation—a sort of Advent Season. Just as Advent is the time when we prepare our hearts to meet Our Blessed Saviour Who comes to us at Christmastime as a little Babe—so in this season we ought to prepare for Whitsuntide or Pentecost, to make ourselves ready to receive into our hearts the gift of God the Holy Ghost. May God help us to take hold of that, His inestimable gift, and make us feel more and more, day by day, its exceeding preciousness.

In God's dealings with His people we can in some measure understand how all that He does is done for one steady and unchanging purpose : the purpose of guiding and blessing them ; of leading them farther and farther into the treasures of His goodness and grace. In all His doings there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. And may we not believe that it is even so with our own lives—that God is dealing with us according to a gracious and settled plan ; that in all His dealings with us, He is giving us some gift, or teaching us some lesson, which will bring us nearer to the knowledge and love of Him, if we will receive it as we ought ? Sometimes indeed the events of our lives seem to follow one another very much at haphazard—" a maze without a plan " ; but surely that is not so. It seems so, because of our own fickleness and waywardness ; we are so often deaf to God's teaching ; we so often despise and cast away His gifts. Worldly people speak of fortune as changeable and fickle : when they are prosperous, they say that fortune is kind to them ; when sorrow and loss come upon them, they say that fortune has deserted them. We know that it is folly to speak so.

God indeed bringeth low and raiseth up, but it is not from changeableness or caprice ; He does all with one unvarying purpose of love ; He does all to lead us to love and trust Him, to make us worthier of His love.

Often we can see what this purpose is. When He sends us comfort, happiness and joy, we know that He would move us to gratitude, that thankful hearts may be readier to open themselves to His love. If He allows trials and temptations to come upon us, we know that He always provides a way of escape ; and more than that He gives us the opportunity—if we will—of turning them to our great gain and blessing. And who is there who has not felt, in looking back, how grief and affliction, suffering and pain, have done their blessed work of purifying and calming the soul, have taught their blessed lessons of loving trust, and patient love ? And even apart from the good which suffering may do to ourselves, it is an opportunity of helping others by setting the example of patience and submission to God's will ; and shall we despise the blessedness of blessing others ? Shall we despise the privilege of doing the work of Angels ?

The steadfastness and faithfulness of God, the constancy of His love, are an unfailing source of comfort to those who have learnt lessons of patience in tribulation, of peace in suffering, and hope in sorrow, beside a bed of weary sickness ; still more to those who have stood as mourners by the grave of a dear friend. And we shall surely not forget how gloriously this Easter Season confirms and brightens our hope. For death itself, it tells us, is only the last of the blessings which God sheds upon us on this earth. If grief and sorrow, sickness and pain, are blessings in disguise, so is death—the death of the righteous—expedient for us. Death is indeed the gate of life ; the Angel sent to bring us to the presence of Him Who is our life and crown of rejoicing. It is the good gift, the perfect gift, of Him in Whose love there is no variableness or shadow of turning.

“ Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end.*” His is indeed an unchanging love, a love that is not only stronger than death, but has made death itself its minister of mercy and blessing. May we give ourselves to Him, and feel more and more the might of His grace and love, that at last, when the end shall come, He, Who has led us all our life through, may send His messenger and receive us into everlasting habitations.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

BY THE REVEREND HENRY V. DER H. COWELL, B.A.

ST. JAMES V. 16.

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

THIS is Rogation Sunday. It is so called because it is the first day of the week in which the Rogation days occur. And the Gospel for the day—which contains Our Lord’s words about asking in His Name—is in striking harmony with the subject to which the Church invites our attention, indicating either that the Gospel was chosen with reference to these days or that this special time was selected because the Gospel already distinguished this as the Sunday concerning asking.

The custom of observing these days is certainly a very ancient one. By some their institution is attributed to a bishop of Vienne at a time of public calamity in the fifth century. But it seems probable that they had been kept previous to that for the purpose of asking God’s blessing on the rising produce of the soil, and were only employed by him for a special end. In any case the practice has come down to us hallowed by long usage.

Now there are those to whom the antiquity of the observance would suggest an objection to its continued use. There are those who would urge that what was appropriate in the past, when men’s knowledge was in a

cruder state, is no longer fitting now that the regular working of the laws of Nature has been discovered.

I propose, therefore, to clear the way for the enforcement of the duty of intercessory prayer by considering briefly one or two of the objections most commonly urged against its employment.

It is to such prayer that my text refers, as you will see from the preceding words—"Pray one for another, that ye may be healed." It is of such prayer that it asserts the efficacy.

Why then is its efficacy questioned? First, it is alleged that it is foolish to appeal to God with reference to physical things because they are regulated by the fixed working of unalterable laws.

Now, that the laws of Nature are steadfast in their operation—that cause and effect are linked together by a decree which it would be idle for man to ask his Maker to set aside—I freely grant.

If, therefore, changes in men's physical condition could not take place without a violation of those principles which are the expression of the Will of Him "with Whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning," I grant that prayer with reference to material matters would be childish and presumptuous.

But, my friends, I do not believe that the fixity of the laws of Nature prevents the possibility of Divine intervention. For I find that the great Creator has given even man a controlling power by which he can prevent those laws from working him harm, and can overrule their operation for the promotion of his interests.

By a law of Nature water seeks its level, and, by virtue of this law, it would work in many cases incalculable mischief, if man had no power to avert the damage. But man has that power. Some years ago a small hand held against an opening in an embankment in Holland, until further help came, prevented a whole district from being deluged. And, in other ways, by many ingenious

contrivances, men have made the forces of Nature their servants and have made them work out their purposes and promote their prosperity.

And I maintain that it is unreasonable to suppose that the Almighty has granted to human freedom an influence on the world and has not reserved the same right to Himself.

The regularity of the laws of Nature, therefore, to my mind does not render an appeal to God with reference to external things irrational. In a thousand ways, it seems to me, without setting aside those laws, He can make all things work together for good.

Whether, in any given case, He should see it wise to intervene is quite another matter. It may be that in His wisdom He will see fit that trials shall teach by their stern discipline, that men's attention may be called to the expressions of His Will. It may be that the higher interests of men may necessitate the suffering of the few in the interests of the many. It may be that what we deem the direst calamities may be in truth the kindest benedictions. Therefore it behoves us ever to ask in entire submission to His far-seeing mind and His all-perfect Will. But, with this proviso, we may surely commit ourselves and others to His kindly care in the assurance that He careth for us, leaving Him to answer our petitions as He may see best.

But, again, it is objected that intercessory prayer supposes that God has made the interests of His creatures contingent on the breath of their fellow men.

"Can it be," it is asked, "that the great Father above needs to be told of the state of any of His children or be moved by men to intervene on their behalf more than He otherwise would?"

Those who so speak must overlook the commonest facts around them in the world. For, is it not evident that God has seen good to make the well-being of His creatures to depend upon others in many ways? Have not the most self-reliant men been greatly assisted by the

kindness of others? Have not many of the severest ills that have happened to men come upon them through the carelessness or neglect of others? Yes, it is manifest that men do act and react upon each other—that their interests can be helped or hindered by the kindness and coldness of their fellows. It is, therefore, in accordance with analogy that God should permit prayer to determine, in a measure, the welfare of those for whom we pray.

This may involve a mystery which we cannot fathom, but, as a fact, it is in keeping with the ordinary course of God's providence.

Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe that the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much alike towards the temporal and spiritual welfare of his fellow men.

And, this being so, I would urge upon you to make abundant use of this mighty power of intercessory prayer.

Prayer for others gives a healthy play to our minds and hearts. It carries us out of the petty interests of our own limited life, and gives exercise to that unselfish sympathy which is the divinest element in our nature.

Prayer for others brings us into close affinity with Him Whose Ascension we are this week to celebrate, for it blends with that intercession which He offers continually in Heaven on behalf of mankind.

Prayer for others is woven into the very texture of that model prayer which is called by the name of Our Lord and Master, and it is directly enjoined by His Apostle who exhorts that first of all, "supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men"; as, also, by St. James in connexion with the text.

Prayer for others promotes that blessed unity which the Redeemer sought so earnestly for His Church.

"For so the whole round earth is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God." Pray much then and often for others. Pray for the temporal interests of men. Pray God to provide for their creature wants. Pray Him

to protect and prosper them. Pray for "All sorts and conditions of men"—for the wealthy that in their prosperity they may not forget God ; for the poor that in their poverty they may not have hard thoughts of Him. Pray for the nations of the earth as well as its individuals.

Above all, pray that the Kingdom of our Exalted Lord may come in its beneficent reign and that God's Will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Pray thus large prayers, for intercessory prayer availeth much.

But I must pass on to speak of the conditions on which such prayer prevails.

It is not all prayer for others—as it is not all prayer for ourselves—that enters acceptably the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Otherwise, this world would be far other than it is, for many and varied prayers go up from ten thousand lips daily, and were they genuine and deep their effect would be mighty and far-reaching. It is not, I say, all prayer that availeth much, only such as is defined in the text as "effectual, fervent."

In the original there is but one word for these two epithets, but that word is so forceful that it is impossible to convey its fullness by any single term. "Earnest" is perhaps the nearest approach to it—"The prayer of the righteous availeth much—if it is earnest."

Now earnest prayer is no easy thing. A relative of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet and philosopher, was sitting at his bedside, he tells us, one afternoon, when the conversation turned upon his past life and the moments in which some acts in it had been misrepresented. "But I have no difficulty," said he, "in forgiveness ; indeed, I know not how to say with sincerity the clause in the Lord's Prayer which asks forgiveness *as we forgive*. I feel nothing answering to it in my heart. Neither do I feel or reckon the most solemn faith in God as a real object, the most arduous action of the reason and will ; oh no, my dear, it is *to pray, to pray* as God would have us—this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul.

Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereupon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare upon earth. *Teach us to pray, O Lord!*" And then he burst into a flood of tears and begged his companion to pray for him.

Indeed we do need to be *taught* to pray. We need the kindling and directing influence of Divine grace to awaken within us good desires and to enable us to express those desires fitly. We need to have the spirit of prayer excited in us, the grace of supplication granted to us.

But thank God this need has been met, for the Spirit helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

But, if our prayers are to be earnest, we must make diligent use of this Divine help. We must not expect the Blessed Spirit to give us prayers if we do not give pains to turn to advantage the motions of His brooding influence within. We must, therefore, stir up our souls to call upon our God. We must diligently prepare ourselves for this holy exercise, by reading and reflection; we must centre our thoughts upon it while engaged in it; and we must watch unto prayer with all perseverance. We must stimulate again and again our flagging energies. We must endeavour by fresh effort to sustain the height gained, and if possible to reach to higher things. For, as a bird cannot keep itself poised in the air, much less descend without a constant use of its wings, so neither can we keep ourselves above the world, much less attain greater elevation of soul, without continual and painstaking effort.

Let us bear in mind, then, that earnestness is the chief condition of success in prayer, and strive above all after this. Without this the most reverent attitude and the most fitting expressions are all in vain. With this, stammering lips are eloquent in God's ears, and halting phrases are met by His kind acceptance.

Only let us beware of confusing the condition with the cause of acceptableness in prayer. We shall not be heard unless our hearts be engaged. But it is not the fervour of our feeling which gives availingness to our petitions. They rise to Heaven as sweet incense only because they are perfumed by His intercession Who stands as our great High Priest in the most Holy Place on high. While, therefore, our prayers are profitless without earnestness, we are not—we must bear in mind—to rely upon that earnestness, but only on the merits and mediation of our Blessed Redeemer Who has said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.”

This dependence on the Saviour for the acceptableness of our prayers may perhaps be indicated indirectly by an expression in the text. We are told that “the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much.”

Since none are righteous save as they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, St. James may mean to remind his readers that it is not their zealous feeling after all that wins for them a hearing at the footstool of the All-Holy.

But while this is a fact ever to be remembered, I am not sure that this is the purpose for which the Apostle employs the term “righteous.”

At all events I think it teaches us something further—namely, that the earnestness of our prayers depends upon the purity and rectitude of our lives. Whether or no the word “righteous” here has a reference to the righteousness of justification, I believe it has a distinct reference to the righteousness of sanctification. And a very important lesson is thus suggested to us, namely, that the life determines the character of our prayers.

We cannot rise to God by one spring of the soul, as it were, from a low level. We must habitually walk with Him if we are at stated times more peculiarly to rise to intimate converse with Him.

If we would pray earnestly, we must, in Christ, live

righteously. The special depends more than we are apt to think on the habitual.

We cannot by one effort shake off thoughts and feelings which are tinged through and through with worldliness and take on a fitting frame of mind for worship. We cannot lay aside the habit of the soul as we lay aside the garment that clothes the body to take one more seemly for God's presence.

Our state of soul in prayer is regulated by the ordinary tone of our lives. Therefore the poet says well :

“ He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God Who loveth us
He made and loveth all.”

If then we would pray warmly for others, we must live in kindly relationship with others. If we would ask great things for our fellow-men of God we must cultivate considerateness towards them at all times.

And, since our poor human feelings are apt to become meagre, save as they are replenished afresh from those springs that flow from that fountain of life which wells from the throne of God and of the Lamb, we must keep ourselves ever in open communication with that great source of love and must avail ourselves of all those means of grace by which our souls are fed from that Eternal fount of Charity.

Let us, then, draw near to the Saviour to-day as He stands ready to meet us in that Great Ordinance in which He verily imparts Himself to all waiting hearts, and, having received out of His fullness—from time to time—grace for grace, let us guard sacredly the bestowment of Divine love, lest our devout feelings should be evaporated by the heat of life, or should be absorbed in its sandy barrenness. And, in His strength, let us keep clear from pollution the grace which He gives, that being pure in heart we may find Him Who heareth prayer ever near, and

having depth of earnest desire may gain acceptance for our prayers—through our gracious Advocate. Then, however humble our place in life, however meagre our abilities, however little we may seem able to do, each of us will be a centre of untold influence—the range of which only eternity can disclose ; for “ the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

ASCENSION DAY

A FESTIVAL OF GLORY

BY THE REVEREND HUGH FRASER STEWART, D.D.

ST. JOHN xvii. 22, 23.

"The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them"; etc.

ASCENSION Day is a Festival of Glory. It commemorates, if not the consummation of Christ's glory (for that is beyond the measure of the human imagination) at least a further and a very lofty point of His exaltation. He was indeed being exalted all through His life on earth—even in the moments of what seem to be His deepest humiliation. When Judas went out into the night to do the darkest deed in history, the Lord proclaimed that He was "glorified." It was the first step in the Passion, in that final victory over temptation, that supreme and glorious self-sacrifice; and He Whose life as man was one steady victory over temptation, one long self-sacrifice, could rightly and triumphantly proclaim its close as glorious. And when He hung upon the Cross, the very symbol of disgrace and degradation, He was ringed with the glory of His surpassing conquest. It was a true instinct of the earliest Christian art to represent the Cross without the circumstances and attributes of suffering which are familiar to us in modern crucifixes, and to lay stress, not on the nails and the horror of it but on the glory of the triumph of Jesus reigning from the Tree.

Glory followed Him when He went and preached to the spirits in prison, and proclaimed the message of a salvation and of a sovereignty that knew no bounds of space and time. And glory broke from the grave whence He arose, leading death captive. The Body in which He went to and fro among His friends during the forty days was a Body of glory; and when at length He entered into His own again, when He resumed all that He had laid aside for our sake, when He ascended into Heaven—it was as King of Glory. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye ancient doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.”

Our first act, therefore, on the morning of Ascension Day will be one of simple thankful adoration of the Blessed and Glorious Trinity; of God the Father, Who hath exalted His Son with great triumph; of God the Son, Who lives and reigns with Him and the Spirit in glory; of God the Holy Spirit, through Whom alone we can apprehend something of what it all means, Who strengthens us and exalts us, unworthy though we be, unto the same place of glory, and makes us one with the sole object of our worship. But in order that our worship this day may not be without understanding, we have to consider as best we may, and as far as it is given us to understand, what is the nature of the glory of the Ascended Lord. We cannot dare to hope that we *can* understand it fully—how could we while our spirits are hampered with the body of our humiliation—“*dum corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam*”? But Holy Scripture teaches us certain aspects of the great mystery, and following its guidance we may arrive at a degree of knowledge which deepens our love and quickens our adoration. Holy Scripture tells us plainly that the Lord Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God the Father. The right hand of the Father denotes the power of the Father, and the power of the Father is that power which Our Saviour claimed as His when He said, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven

and in earth." It is a royal power, not the same power that belongs to Him as Logos, as the Creative Agent, by Whom all things were made. This is a new, a re-creating, perfecting, power, the full force of which was not manifested until His exaltation to the right hand—which indeed will not be fully manifested until all things have been subjected unto Him—until He is all in all.

This royal power is not a state of inactive repose. If we are told that He sits in glory, we also learn that He stands in glory. So St. Stephen saw Him—standing, ready to act and acting. It is by action that His Kingly power is revealed; and His action is two-fold—inward, through the Spirit, towards God the Father, and outward through the same Spirit, towards His brethren (He is not ashamed to call us brethren) of the human family, whose glorious destiny it is to be made one as the Holy Trinity is One—yea, that it may be made one with the Holy Trinity.

The one aspect, the inward, is represented by the continual intercession which, we are well assured, He continually makes for us; the other, the outward, is represented by His continual coming among us, of which we have the witness of our own blessed experience. He intercedes continually for us—that is, He represents humanity to the Father, once more well pleasing to Him in virtue of the obedience which He has offered on our behalf, and which we could not offer of ourselves. He comes continually to us and among us. His coming is not confined to His great Second Coming on the last and awful day, the coming in Judgment. His power of judgment is, we may believe, in abeyance until then. He came into the world to judge it, and yet he judgeth no man. He came for judgment, yet not yet to judge. *Then*, indeed, He will come with glory. But He is ever coming—He is ever bringing men under the influence of His active, glorious, redeeming power—coming in the Spirit, coming in His Word, coming in His Sacraments, drawing near to

us at every point of life when the spirit conquers the flesh ; and each coming is an enhancement of His glory.

This thought leads us to think of the share we have in His glory—His Kingly glory. We, too, are a race of kings.

But as His power as Redeemer is conditioned by man's free will, so is His glory. He cannot redeem man against man's will. He cannot give him the glory, if he will not have it. Thus we may share in His glory, or not share in it, according as we choose. But further—and this is a very serious thought for all of us—we have the power to impair His glory. We may put Him to shame. We know that there are some of whom the awful warning has been pronounced, "that having been once enlightened, and having once tasted of the heavenly gift and been mere partakers of the Holy Ghost and then fallen away, it is impossible, humanly speaking, to renew them unto repentance, seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." God, in His mercy, which is infinite, grant that no human soul we know may come into this condemnation. Open, wilful apostasy, with its fearful consequences to the man's self and to others, is what we may hope is not *our* lot, nor that of those we love. But there are other ways short of wilful, open apostasy by which we may put the Son of God to shame. If by our words or acts we deter others from coming to Him, we cause the enemy to blaspheme and revile Him, and so put Him to shame and spoil His glory. We may prevent the world from knowing Him, we may run clean counter to our destiny and His purpose which, as declared in the text, is that the world, through us who have known Him, may come to know Him too. That is His glorious purpose for all Christians, and especially for those whom He calls to be the ministers of His Gospel.

And, indeed, every un-Christlike act and every un-Christlike thought—for out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh, the hand acteth—is a putting Him to shame. Church history is full of deeds done in His name

which are altogether unworthy of Him and put Him to rebuke. Our own little lives are full at every turn of such deeds. Let us resolve, this Ascension Day, that there shall henceforward be fewer of them in *our* lives at least—that we will henceforward not be ashamed of the Gospel with which we are fraught, that we will be living witnesses of the Christ and of the power of His glory. We cannot indeed always be speaking to the world of spiritual things, but we can, please God, be daily, hourly, witnesses of His Resurrection, and bear in our faces some faint reflection of the Glory which has been revealed to us, and which grows from glory to glory unto the perfect day.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION

WAITING FOR THE PROMISE

BY THE REVEREND H. G. BONAVIDA-HUNT, MUS.D.

ACTS i. 14.

“ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.”

“ THESE ”—what were “ these ” to do with themselves while they were carrying out the command of their Risen and Ascended Lord, to wait, to wait for that which the Father had promised them, for that which He had pledged His word to give them through His Son, Jesus Christ? Were they to go each of them, like hunted rabbits, into their holes to wait for some unearthly summons to call them forth to begin their ministry so full of peril, so full of uncertainty, and yet so full of joy and ultimate triumph? What were they to do? A common instinct drew them all together. The few once scattered in the Garden of Gethsemane, the few who hid themselves in terror after the time of the Crucifixion, who when their Lord appeared to them again and again refused, some of them for a time, to believe what they before would have appealed to with certainty—the evidence of their senses—they must come together for mutual support, for mutual encouragement, for mutual communion and prayer. What more natural than to see these simple folk gathered together in the retreat of the large upper room in Jerusalem? There were about one hundred and twenty men

and women there ; and they were all engaged in the one act of waiting—the *act*, I say, for I suppose to wait is one of the most strenuous exercises of will and endurance in certain circumstances, that can be exacted from anyone.

Think of St. Peter, the impetuous one, who always wanted to be saying or doing something, who could never endure to be silent or to be patient while something was expected, something was to be done. Think of the exercise of patience required in a case like that. Think of those men of various dispositions, all assembled together, with one common object of obeying their Lord's injunctions. They were united ; for the first and only time in the history of the Church we find a hundred and twenty people, the whole flock of Christ—small, but the whole of them—gathered together in communion of heart and life. One common trust energized them all ; they took the Lord at His Word ; they were receiving His first order—not their marching orders—His first command : " Wait." And they had time then to consider the whole matter. Was it of any use their all coming together day after day like this ? First the Thursday, the day of the Ascension ; next, the Friday, the preparation for their own sabbath ; then the Saturday. How long was it to be ? Not one word did Our Saviour give them as to the exact time of the fulfilment of the promise. He might easily have said, " Wait for ten days, and at the end of that time you shall receive it." Nothing of the kind. Not one word ; it was not for them to know the times or seasons which were in the Father's Hand.

The first act, therefore, of the Christian Church was one of absolute trust and confidence in their Heavenly Father. Without question, without scruple, without doubt, without impatience or question they were to wait. And so the time went on. Then came the first day of the week, as it were, this very day. Surely on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's glorious Resurrection, surely the promised gift will arrive. Hour after hour went by,

and there was still no sign ; seven more days they waited, each day seeming perhaps longer than the other, before it came. But it was the test of their trust in the common Father and in His Word given them through Jesus Christ. Oh, what a splendid spiritual education this was for them. It was the tempering of the steel of the sword of the Spirit, which they should afterward wield—the Word of God, powerful, keen as a two-edged sword in their hands, tempered by patience.

They were united also in another way ; although they had to wait in one sense, they were to be active ; they were united in prayer and supplication. One accord, not each uttering his own particular petition quite apart from the others, but assembled as an ecclesia—the Church of Christ—union in common supplications, the first prayer meeting of the Christian Church ; as one after another lifted up his voice in prayer, all were able to join in their hearts. And there was no division of opinion. Oh, if they could only have foreseen what would be the future of the Church first planted in that upper room, what tears of grief and dismay they would have shed. Thank God, they did not see this day when the whole Christian Church is parted asunder, divided into scores or hundreds of sections, each mistrusting, misrepresenting, misunderstanding the other. And yet how different they were in their dispositions and characters. There was St. Peter, the bold, ready enthusiast ; there was St. John, the gentle, contemplative, meditative, loving man ; there was St. Thomas, the one who had passing clouds of theological or spiritual difficulty, not able to see his way clear altogether ; there was St. Philip, speculative, philosophical ; there was Judas, not Iscariot, questioning, inquisitive—there were these and others besides, and each of them, no doubt, attached some special importance to some particular teaching of Our Blessed Lord, but yet all were united in this common act, this common fellowship, all waiting for the promise of the Father. Can we not get a lesson and

warning from this ? God has not made every creature on one stereotyped pattern. We have different dispositions, different ideas, different views. What strikes one as important does not strike another as equally important.

A party of people going into the country and beholding a view—how differently that scene will impress them. One will notice the flowers, and, being of a botanical turn of mind, he will examine the structure of the plants at his feet ; he will search the hedgerows to see if there are some rare kind of flowers growing there. Another will watch the cattle as they graze upon the green sward, and examine the points of breed of the animals ; and another will listen to the singing of the birds, and notice by the differences in their song to what species they belong. Another, with an eye for colour, will take note of the distant view of the hills that close up the horizon ; and another—weatherwise—will look up at the sky and see whether it is likely to continue fine for the present or whether there is any sign of rain ; while, perhaps, another will drink in the whole scene ; he will *feel* the landscape—the blue sky above with its golden fleecy clouds ; the hills in the distance with their bloom of purple mist ; the green beneath his feet variegated with the hues of God's own blooms ; the singing of the birds, a chorus of feathered angels above him ; the whole thing will speak to him of the loving Maker of all creatures and of all things. When they go home and talk together about it, each one will speak of that feature of his trip which most impressed him, the object upon which he set his most interested gaze ; it is the same scene ; they do not quarrel about it. It is only in the world of spiritual things, the so-called religious world, that men dispute and wrangle and hate each other. Men never fought over a landscape or a seascape ; but they fight over the eternal view of the hills of Sion, and the prospects of Heaven above.

What a testimony it is to the innate corruption of the human heart that the most sublime, the most beautiful

and the most compelling of all subjects which could engage our attention, is that which creates the most discord, is productive of the greatest mischief in the whole world. See how many things people can be divided about in the present day. One makes much of a particular doctrine to the exclusion of all other considerations ; his mind is filled with one idea ; religion to him means that one thing and nothing else. No wonder that he is narrow ; his very process of thought narrows him and, therefore, makes him ungenerous and illiberal to all those who do not attach the same degree of super-importance to that one thing. One man will find his whole religious life bound up in the attendance at some particular ceremonial ; he wants the music to be as elaborate as possible ; he wants the ceremonies, the ritual, to be imposing to the eye. Well, there is nothing against music, thank God, or against ritual in the Bible, for the Bible is full of both ; but those who would attach supreme importance to them to the exclusion or to the minimizing of other greater things—the life of the Spirit—are doing harm to the religion they profess ; they are misrepresenting Christ to the world.

There are others, on the other hand, who regard music and ceremonial with the utmost distrust and suspicion and fear, and lest that should be great which they wish to be little, they decry it and condemn those who cherish it. So they fight. And the outsider, the man who stands outside the influences of religion altogether (probably alienated by this very spirit of war and strife within the Church) laughs—laughs the whole thing to scorn, saying, “ Call this Christianity ? ” No, Christ does not call it Christianity. He has another name for it ; it is “ selfishness.” “ What *I* think, what *I* desire, what *I* prefer, must be *your* thought, *your* wish, *your* preference.” That is the secret, if we can call it so, of the manifold and most distressing divisions of the Church of Jesus Christ, which prevent us from all gathering together under the

common roof of the great Heaven of our Father, and engaging with one accord in prayer and supplication.

We stand now within seven days of the great outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the Church of Jesus Christ, which came as an answer to that prayer. God promises blessings, but with conditions, and the necessary condition is the prayer of faith. Why should I say "of faith"? There is no prayer without faith. A man who kneels down and mumbles through the prayers of the Church, or through his private devotions morning and evening, and gets up scarcely remembering what has passed his lips or entered into his ears—he has never prayed. Prayer must be the prayer of the whole spirit; the whole being of man must be poured out to God in faith that God will answer; and then that channel of communication established between God and man, the blessings pour through on the whole body of believers. That prayer in the upper chamber was not merely prayer for the people themselves; it was prayer for the whole of mankind. The whole human race was embraced in those petitions. "Thy Kingdom come"—we may be sure they used the Lord's Prayer, that prayer which Christ had taught them—"Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done in earth as we know it is in Heaven, where our Christ, our Lord and Master sits at the right hand of God." We want that prayer prayed now. And I will ask all of you to join together during this week, either privately or publicly, in the prayers of the Church, for a double outpouring, of the Pentecostal gift on Sunday next.

This is a very dead and dreary life we are leading without God's Spirit dwelling in us, animating, vivifying, enlightening, warming us towards Him and towards each other—yes, towards each other. The very fact that they were joined together in common prayer and supplication, linked them close together; they were brothers and sisters indeed gathered there; they did not look round to see whether one was more prominently seated

than another; the women were not examining each other's attire to see how they were dressed; they had their minds fixed on one object, the seeking of the great Spirit of God. That is what we want now. We are told by St. Luke, at the end of his Gospel, that after their Lord ascended into Heaven, they were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God. When they were not in their upper room, when they were not sleeping in their chambers in their homes—some of them very poor places indeed—they were living in God's house in the Temple; and they were living in God's Presence in the upper chamber. I wonder how many of us would care to go to Church at least once a day to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon our souls? We are very sleepy here. There is very little spiritual life in this neighbourhood, if I may judge of it from this congregation. There is plenty of goodwill; there is plenty of kindness; there is plenty of generosity with what one has; but there is very little real spiritual life; and you cannot have kindness, you cannot have generosity to endure without the influence of the Spirit of God, any more than you can expect to pluck flowers from their stems and plant them in the ground and expect them to grow and bloom again. No, you must go back to the root of things; you must get your life direct from Christ. He is the Vine; ye are the branches; except ye abide in Him ye cannot bear fruit; you will have no joy in your own lives, and you cannot give it to others, except you derive it direct from communion with Him and with Him alone.

Oh, then, pray for the promise of the Father. The promise is to you. We are, I suppose, the "far-off" ones to whom St. Peter alludes—far off from him, but God grant that we are not far from our Heavenly Father Who is always ready to draw nigh to us. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you"—let this be the message of this great day, this period of—not suspense—but trial of your faith. Let us try to exercise those gifts which

God has planted in the soul of every person here, gifts which can be made glorious in your lives, if you will only just exercise them. Have nothing more to do with shams—no fads in religion. Go to the fountain-head. Pray often and earnestly, and you will get showers of abundant blessings upon your life here and upon your life hereafter.

WHITSUNDAY

THE PENTECOSTAL GIFT

BY THE REVEREND ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.

ST. JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.”

THE miraculous gift bestowed at Pentecost was not confined to the descent of the tongues of fire at Jerusalem, nor to the life-time of the Apostles, nor yet to the primitive Church. It remains in its fulness even until now, and we are partakers of its presence and its power. It sheds its brightness down the long series of centuries, and illumines still the whole atmosphere of the Christian Church.

If one were asked where its influence can be most clearly traced, I suppose that one would say in the perpetuity of the faith and of holiness, and in the reality of sacraments and ordinances. Thousands can testify, as a matter of personal experience, to its power in Baptism, in Absolution, in Confirmation, in the Eucharist, and in Holy Orders. And we know that these experiences are not delusive, because they are in accordance with the Divine promises.

But there are other ways, less obvious perhaps but not less real, in which the Holy Spirit continually manifests His power among us by the influences which He brings to bear upon the details of our daily life: and we probably lose a great deal by often failing to recognize

the true source of such influences. We think them ordinary and earthly, when they are really special and Divine.

The acquiring of a principle, a living principle, one that is not a mere opinion to play with, but a rule to live by; the winning of a truth, a vital truth, one that gives a tone to thought and action, and is not mere material for idle speculation; the gaining, or losing, of a friend, a real friend, one who is indeed as our own soul to us; these are the things which give reality to life, and leave such an impress on it that we cannot altogether forget or ignore them, but must recognize them as landmarks in our spiritual career. Why should we not go a step farther, and recognize in them gleams from the brightness of Pentecost, less clearly marked, but not less true, than the falling of the tongues of fire?

The cause of our beginning to appreciate and accept some new right principle or some new truth, which we feel has since had a large influence for good upon our thought and conduct, cannot be a matter of chance. Even if we could believe that it was what the world calls a "mere accident" that the new principle and new truth fell in our way, still our power to perceive them, and our readiness to accept them, must be attributed to a higher cause. In such matters we have no power at all, except it be given us from above. And shall we not say at least as much of the making of a friend, who may be the embodiment of many a good principle, and the living realization of many a beautiful truth. Surely the obtaining of such a boon as this—this friend who has set before us higher ideals of life and shown us the more excellent way—cannot be regarded as a mere caprice of fortune, but must rather be accounted as one of the sweetest influences of Him Who maketh us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

The influence which a worthy friend has over our lives is one of our best helps towards understanding the

nature of the heavenly influence of the Comforter ; how He can constrain without compelling, how He can act upon thought and life, and yet leave us free. We yield to the advice of those who are wiser than ourselves : we yield to the requests of those who are dearer to us than the wise. In the one case reason, in the other case affection, sways our will. Do we, therefore, feel that our freedom has been invaded—that we have been under the pressure of an iron necessity ? Should we be ready to believe that, in listening to advice, which we ourselves saw to be good, or in granting a request, which it was a delight to ourselves to grant, we were really in fetters, which did not gall us, only because they were hidden from us ? It would be more true to say that we exerted our liberty in estimating the value of the advice and of the request, and in choosing to act upon them.

If this be the case when another *human* mind influences our own, how much more when we are influenced by one which is *Divine*. When a higher Intelligence than our own provides us with motives, of which (if we had been left to ourselves) we should have been ignorant, but which we appreciate and welcome as soon as we know them, the result is, *not* that we become the slaves of that superior Power, but that by contact with It our own principles of action become more elevated, more enlightened, more enlarged. The Holy Spirit recognizes the royal freedom of the human will, and, in influencing it, appeals not to force, but to reason and affection. He does not supersede the rightful functions of the will, but He supplies the will with helps for the rightful discharge of those functions.

If we need any further proof that the operation of the Comforter upon our wills is no irresistible compulsion, there is the sad experience, which we all of us have, that it is possible to resist Him with success. So awful is the freedom which has been bestowed upon us, that by means of it we have the power even to out-will God. He

wills our holiness, and we long to sin ; and if we choose we can have our way. Those special graces which are given to us in Baptism, in Confirmation, and in the Holy Communion, can be neglected and abused ; and so also can those less obvious graces and opportunities which we have just been considering. We may abandon or pervert the good principles which we have acquired, and which would have raised us far above ourselves. We may distort and misapply the noble truths which we have learned, and which would have illuminated the whole of our moral life : and by such misapplication we may even lose our hold of them altogether.

We may disregard or misuse the friend whom we had gained, who might have been to us a guide and companion in the daily walk towards Heaven. And thus those many helps which the Divine Strengtheners provided for us as opportunities of salvation, will have become to us, not only wasted and therefore worthless opportunities, but opportunities of condemnation—occasions of falling.

This evil result may come about in a very subtle manner ; so subtle as to lead those, who are not earnestly on the watch, to believe that no evil is present, and that none is to be feared. For, although we do not reject these good gifts, yet we may be tempted to rest in them, instead of pressing onwards towards their Source. We may accept them gratefully and loyally at first, rise with them to a certain level, and there be content to remain ; not seeing that these good things tell of a goodness higher still, to which they ought to lead us, but the place of which they ought not to be allowed to fill. Woe to us, if the principles and truths, which we learn here below about ourselves and the universe, so fascinate and enthrall us, that we cease to care about rising to Him Who is "*the Truth*" ! Woe to us, if the friend, whom God has given us to lead us upward to Himself, ends in stealing away our heart from the God Who gave him, and keeps the soul, which should have climbed by his aid up to Heaven, only the more

closely bound to earth, and to that world which "cannot receive the Spirit of Truth," because "it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."

Are we then of the world which *cannot* receive the Spirit of Truth; so fast bound to it, that we have become part of it, influenced by its principles, resting in its unspiritual truths, making a friend of it, and thus becoming at enmity with God? We are all of us too prone to look merely at the human and material side of life, taking little account of that which is spiritual and divine. That which strikes our senses, which excites our emotions, which commends itself to our intellect—these are the things which impress and occupy us, and gradually win to themselves our whole attention and our closest love. We do not penetrate to the inward and eternal, but remain fast rooted and bound in that which is visible and perishable. We fail to behold the Divine Spirit working in the manifold changes of life. We do not know Him as the guiding principle through all. We accept His gifts, and use or misuse them as the case may be; but the Giver of them is forgotten or ignored.

Shall another Pentecost come and go, and leave us still with so little appreciation of those "diversities of gifts," which are indeed sown broadcast around our lives, although they come to us no more as tongues, like as of fire? Let us try to put real faith and trust in the power of Christ's prayer, that the Comforter once given may abide with us for ever, not merely in those special acts of devotion which we make here and elsewhere at stated intervals, but in all the vicissitudes and all the manifold relations of life. Let the happiness, which all of us in some measure, and some of us in very large measure enjoy, speak to us of the Spirit of joy and peace. Let the achievements of our industry and skill, and the conquests of our intellect, remind us of Him Who is the source of all energy and of all truth. Let the heartfelt affection, which it is such a joy to pour forth without stint upon

our dearest and our best, even when it meets but with small response from them, lead us onward to Him Who Himself is Love, the Love which alone never faileth, the Love which passeth all understanding. Then let us bring our will, as the best that we have, and offer it to God's Holy Spirit, beseeching Him to "make us perfect in every good thing to do His Will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ."



"Thou, Who hast given us power to see
And love this world so fair,
Oh, give us grace to find out Thee
And read Thee everywhere."

TRINITY SUNDAY

THE BLESSED TRINITY

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM SPICER WOOD, D.D.

2 CORINTHIANS *xiii.* 14.

“ The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”

You have heard these words times without number. They have been heard in the Church by congregation after congregation, from the very earliest ages of the preaching of the Gospel. For they were adopted in the first Liturgies and have continued to form part of the service ever since. Sunday after Sunday, as we close the prayers, we repeat them. Does it ever occur to us to think what may be the meaning contained in them—whether there be one deeper than that which lies upon the surface, whether they be not admirably fitted to be adopted as the Church's final prayer for those who have been joining in her solemn services? I think, if we consider, we shall find that they are worth meditating on, that it will be well for us if we can realize and secure to ourselves the blessings of which they make mention.

One reason why they are employed by the Church is a reason which makes them specially suitable to form the subject of our meditations this day. It is that they contain plainly and distinctly, the Names of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. On this day we specially commemorate that great mystery that He Who was born at Bethlehem and Who suffered and died on man's behalf,

and He Who, on the Day of Pentecost, came down in cloven tongues as of fire and sat upon each of the assembled disciples, and He of Whom the Saviour is the Son and by Whom the Holy Ghost was sent, Three Persons, are yet One God, One Holy Indivisible Trinity.

Now, this great truth is not contained in so many express words in the Bible. You do not find it anywhere stated, as it is in "the Creed of St. Athanasius," that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are all One, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal, or that such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. These declarations in this form were drawn up in later times and adopted by the Church, because men had arisen who denied the truth which they set forth, and it was therefore necessary that that truth should be exhibited in the plainest and most unmistakable language. But although the doctrine may not be put down in these precise terms in the Bible, yet it is contained there in such a manner that no man of fair, unbiased disposition can fail to perceive and acknowledge it. Our Lord, for example, says that He and the Father are One, and the things which the Father is said to do are spoken of as being done by the Son ; while, in like manner, the Holy Ghost is mentioned as God, and as also doing the works which the Father and the Son do. All Three Persons are also mentioned together, as in the last command given by Jesus to His disciples, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost " ; or, as in St. Paul's closing words to the Corinthians, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."

I need not, however, take up your time in pointing out the way in which this doctrine is contained in and can most certainly be proved by Holy Scripture. I have been mainly desirous of explaining why it should be admirably suited, both to sum up the Church's prayers, inasmuch as

it prays for a special blessing from each Person of the Trinity, and to occupy our thoughts on this day when we are commemorating the Holy Trinity. Let us now therefore pass on to a more close examination of the words themselves.

“The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost.” What is implied in these words, or rather what is there which a Christian needs, both here and hereafter, which is not implied in them? If we have them, what blessing is there which we are without?

The word “grace,” in its original sense, means favour; and the Grace of Jesus Christ, in accordance with that meaning, may be explained to be His Favour, the favour which He showed to man in taking upon Him man’s nature and working out man’s Redemption. It may mean the particular favour or kindly feeling which He has for those who accept His mercy, through which they are regarded and adopted by Him as brethren, and being upholden in their dangerous passage through life, are finally made partakers of His Glory in the life to come. All that we have and all that we hope for comes from God’s mercy in Christ, and this mercy, shown both to man generally and to Christians in particular, may be considered as the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, perhaps, there is a more peculiar meaning which belongs to it more properly in this place. When we speak of the Grace of Christ, we do not merely mean favour, but also special influence, communicated to man through connexion with Him.

Men are brought into union with their Lord, into very close and intimate union—a union so close, that the Scripture can find no other means of expressing it than by saying that they are “one with Christ,” that they are “members of His Body,” that they are “branches” of Him, and other similitudes of the like kind. Now what is the great blessing which we get from being thus united

with Him? It is that we are made partakers of His Grace—of that influence from Him which is the life-blood of our souls—through which alone they are kept from becoming dead in trespasses and sins. We cannot walk uprightly in a world of iniquity, surrounded and perpetually assailed by temptation, unless we have more help than man can give. How is that help conveyed? By the bestowal of Christ's Grace. We cannot keep up that close relation to and dependence upon God, which can alone give vigour and earnestness to our prayers, and fill us with a sense of our nearness to the Heavenly Father, without a something to remind us continually that God is our Father. And what is that something? It is the Grace, the holy influence of Christ, bestowed upon and working in us. We cannot go on day after day in the path that leadeth unto life, when there are things on all sides tending to draw us away from it, and when our own hearts are very treacherous. We cannot feel the comfort of religion, when we know that do what we may, religion is very apt to grow dead within us.

We cannot look forward with anything like joy to the end of our course, when we know that there are dark waters to be crossed and that the stream may flow over our head and we may sink never to rise again. We cannot, I say, in the midst of all there is to deaden and discourage and mislead us, be full of vigour and perseverance and holy comfort, such as a Christian ought to have, unless there be in us a power which does not belong to us by nature.

And what is that power? It is the Grace of Christ imparted to us and working in us. I said before that we were united to Christ in a manner, the closeness of which is represented in Holy Scripture by our being spoken of as members of His Body, and the Grace which He bestows is the life-blood which flows through that Body. It is by that grace that we make increase, that our Christian growth is possible: by it that we are enabled to go on steadily to the end: by it that we are finally prepared for

the life which is to follow after death. How much, then, is contained in the prayer that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with and in us ! For surely the working of that Grace includes the bestowal and display of all Christian excellence.

“ And the Love of God ”—of God the Father—the love which a father has for his children. We are God’s children, both by nature and by adoption : and yet we do not always deserve God’s love. It is not always the case that children are obedient to their parents’ wishes. They do not always think that their parents are more likely to know what is good for them than they are themselves. They often have a notion that it must be very pleasant to do what they like, or that it shows a manly spirit, and they are impatient of control. And very often, when they give way to their silly notions, and when they are besides drawn on by bad example or bad company, they do things which are very painful to their parents’ feelings. Whereas they ought to be the greatest comfort to those who have had the trouble and anxiety of watching over them in infancy and childhood, they sometimes bring upon them an amount of sorrow which weighs them down to the very edge of the grave.

The love of parents will often survive all this bad conduct ; but we cannot say that children who act in such a manner deserve that their parents should continue to love them. Now this is exactly the manner in which we act towards our Father Who is in Heaven. He has loved us with an amazing love. He has given us all things richly to enjoy. He has admitted us to the name and privilege of being His children, brethren and sisters of His own dear Son, Our Lord. He has opened out to us the prospect of these privileges being continued and multiplied upon us throughout eternity. And what is the way in which we treat this our so gracious Father ? Is He not infinitely wiser than we are ? Does He not know far better than we can possibly do what is for our welfare ?

Can we not feel perfectly certain that the laws which He has given are the best and the kindest that could be devised? He has not so dealt with us as that we can have any doubt about His loving-kindness towards us. When He did not shrink from giving His dearly beloved Son to suffer and to die for us, He made it impossible for us to think that He is not willing with Him freely to give us all things. And yet, notwithstanding this, we listen to anyone rather than to God. We think any laws better than His. If the world bids us listen to its voice, we do not inquire how far that is consistent with God's voice. If our inclinations lead us far astray from the path of holiness, we follow them.

Oh, my brethren, what ungrateful and thoughtless children we are, to take all this kindness at God's hands, and to make Him such a return! Or, not to speak of the downright acts of disobedience of which we are guilty, how apt we are to forget God. While we are thinking of our business and our pleasures, of the endless engagements that fill up our time here, we forget what we owe to God, nay, we forget God Himself. Are we not then utterly undeserving of God's love? Do we not do our best to forfeit it? And yet, if He were to withdraw it from us, what would become of us? Putting the matter on the lowest ground, looking upon it as a question of happiness or misery, to ourselves, and not as a bounden duty that we owe to a Father, a feeling which in His mercy He permits us to have towards Him, we must remember that there is a world to come, a home eternal towards which we are hastening, from which we cannot escape. We must pass away from this world, and we must enter into another state of existence, and in that other state, we must be either happy or miserable beyond description, throughout that never-ending duration which we call eternity.

Now if God's love be not with us, what will be our fate? What else have we to rely upon but that? No merits of our own, no help from others—nothing in the whole

universe. If God do not love us, we are lost, and lost beyond the possibility of redemption. But, once more, God's love depends upon ourselves. I said that we do our best to deserve His wrath. Yet still His Love holds on. Still He seeks to draw us to Himself. Still He warns, reproves, entreats us. In the very depth of our pollution, He seeks us out and would fain love us with a Father's Love and love us to the end. But do not let us deceive ourselves. His Love may be long-suffering and kind, ready and anxious to receive us, willing to take us back again after conduct which would weary out any earthly love. But let us not be mistaken. It may be wearied out. The time may come when the sinner has exhausted even God's patience, and is left to the consequences of his own folly.

It depends, I repeat, upon ourselves. God may be willing; but there must be willingness in us also. His Love may be long-suffering, but it absolutely demands that there be some answering love on our part. We cannot expect that it should last to the day of our death and beyond the grace and throughout eternity, if we persist in disobeying and despising Him. Therefore, this prayer that God's Love may be with us, implies that there be effort in us to deserve the love, that we make some return for it; that we be not only willing to receive what God gives us, but anxious also to give Him what we on our part have to bestow—ourselves, our hearts, our all. We cannot pray that God's Love should be with us without praying at the same time that it should be so shed abroad in our hearts, and have such an influence upon them, that we shall also love and serve Him with all our power.

If there be that, then we shall most surely have God's Love. If Christ's Grace so work in us that we are conformed unto Christ, our living Head in all things, then will the Father bestow upon us that Love which He bears towards His dearly beloved Son. And who can ever fittingly declare the exceeding blessedness of being so loved, of knowing and feeling that our Father recognizes

us as His own and looks upon us as His dear children? We must have sorrow in the world. We cannot help the loss of those that are nearest and dearest to us. We may have to encounter almost a heavier trial, even their estrangement. Any affliction may fall upon us—none can tell of what kind or in what degree. But the Love of God is enough to make up for all sorrow and all bereavement, and all else that we find hard to bear. Earthly trials fall lightly upon those who have the comfort of knowing that their Heavenly Father's smile is upon them. And when the hour of departure comes—that hour in which the things of earth cease to be of value in the dying man's eyes—what a blessing beyond price to know that we still have God's Love, and that we are passing from a scene where we might possibly forfeit it, to one in which we never can. In praying that God's love may be with us, we pray for that which secures a peace that passeth understanding here, and a blessedness which cannot be destroyed or diminished hereafter.

“And the Communion of the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Ghost dwells in the hearts of God's people, and is the Guide and Upholder of God's Church. It is through His continual indwelling that we are knit together in one communion and fellowship both with God and with each other. It is through Him, that we are protected from the assaults of Satan, and kept in our Christian profession. We are quite unable of ourselves to foresee where attacks may come from. The powers of darkness are many and subtle and persevering. They act in a way unseen by us. They surround us at moments and in circumstances, when we are quite unconscious of their presence. We have no security in ourselves against their approach, and no power of resistance when they do attack. The Holy Spirit by His presence acts as our Protector. He sees what we cannot. He gives the strength which we do not possess. He wards off the blows of which we are unconscious. His Presence is at the same time a light unto our

feet and a lamp unto our path, not only protecting us from danger, but leading us onward, making our way plain before us, enabling us to lay hold of and cling to the truth, and so gradually conducting us to the haven where we would be. Through Him, moreover, we are made sensible that we are members of that great Body formed of the Saints below and the Saints above, that Body wherein we hope to live united with our God for ever. In praying then that His Communion may be with us, we pray that we may have the sense of close union with God, which is conveyed by knowing that God Himself is present in our hearts.

What would prayer itself be worth, if we did not know that it was heard? And how should it be heard, unless God were ever at hand? But if the Holy Spirit be within us and we feel it, then are we sure that God heareth what we say unto Him. Again, we pray that we may have the comfort and security which the sense of that Presence inspires. We are walking in a dark path, encompassed by dangers. We have none to help us effectually, unless God be willing. But if He be with us and in us, we know that He is willing and we can depend upon His help. Again, we have the joy of knowing that we are one with that great company whom the Lamb hath redeemed. It would be a trial to our faith, if we were alone in the world, even though we had the sense of God's favour. But the Holy Ghost, by His Presence in us and in the whole Church, knits all into one, and so gives us both the happiness of knowing that we are not alone, and the feeling of mutual charity and help that springs up in those who are members of one great Body.

And further, this Presence of the Blessed Spirit of God for which we pray, assures us of our union not only now but hereafter, with our God. We have fellowship with Him now. It will not be broken off, when our fellowship with this world ceases. Nay, it will become only more close and intimate and visible to us. Now we see, through a

glass darkly. The things of Heaven, the Presence of God, the blessedness of communion with the Saints, are all things of which we have only a dim notion. But then we shall see face to face, we shall be brought into close relationship with God the Father and the Son, then with our glorified bodies be permitted, in conjunction with all who have shared in the favour and love of God, to enjoy for ever the happiness of the world above.

If now we have these things—if the Grace of Christ be bestowed upon us—that Holy Influence which, flowing from Him, makes us His brethren, members of His Body, capable of imitating here the pattern which He set upon earth, and following Him hereafter in His ascent into Heaven : if we have the Love of God the Father, that all-perfect, enduring Love which can forgive even the sins we commit against Him, for the sake of the atonement that was made for them ; and if the Communion of the Holy Ghost be also in our hearts, knitting us to Him and to each other, cherishing the feeling of dependence upon Him, making us sure that our prayers are heard, increasing our love and charity among ourselves, preparing us for the nearer intercourse and more perfect fellowship of Heaven—what more do we need ? Nay, what more is possible for us ? We have the blessing and the protection of each Person of the Blessed Trinity, we have the enjoyment of God's Presence here, the certainty of His abiding Presence hereafter. Surely we shall join with greater earnestness henceforth in this most comprehensive prayer ; surely also we shall strive and pray that we may be enabled to make sure of the blessings which it mentions. They are put within our reach by God. It will be an act of utter folly, not less than of utter ingratitude, if we take not the trouble to make them our own.

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